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THE BIG AMERICAN PARADE

By

E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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Contents

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF AMERICA

1. Our Complex Background	1
2. "The Gilded Age"	7
3. Modern America	15

CHAPTER II

MATERIALISM NO DISGRACE

1. "Colossus of the North"	20
2. American Materialism	27
3. The Great Parade	35

CHAPTER III

WE ARE LOSING OUR "SENSE OF SIN"

1. Morals, Plain and Fancy	39
2. Sex and the Younger Generation	47
3. The Bright Side	54

CHAPTER IV

JAZZ BETTER THAN PURITANISM

1. The World War	58
2. The Automobile	64
3. The Movies	69
4. The Jazz Age	73

CONTENTS

CHAPTER V

A LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE

1. Family Life	78
2. Challenging the Elders	86
3. The Intellectual Change	90

CHAPTER VI

THE AMERICAN WORKINGMAN TODAY

1. Manners—Democratic Style	97
2. The Rights of Man	106
3. The Common Man's Advantage	113

CHAPTER VII

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

1. All Dressed Up	116
2. Change and Conservatism	122
3. What Is Crowd Psychology?	126
4. Phases of the Crowd	130
5. Are We Bored?	132

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAILURE OF THE MELTING POT

1. Once an Ideal	135
2. The Conflict Today	138
3. The Negro	145

CHAPTER IX**NO ALTERNATIVE FOR DEMOCRACY**

1. The "Sovereign" Voter	154
2. The Politician	161
3. Economics and Democracy	166
4. Some Democratic Ideals	169

CHAPTER X**INDIVIDUALISM STILL OUR GOAL**

1. The Spirit of Individualism	173
2. Social Order and Liberty	178
3. "Live and Let Live"	186

CHAPTER XI**THE DOGMA OF REFORMISM**

1. Prohibition	192
2. Other Aspects of Reformism	202
3. The Rôle of the Church	207

CHAPTER XII**ARE WE A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY?**

1. A Christian Country?	211
2. The Church—Spiritual, Institutional and Militant	220
3. The Dream of a Great Revival	226

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONFLICTS OF AMERICAN LIFE

1. Small Town and Countryside	230
2. The City	237
3. Conflict	246

CHAPTER XIV

SECTIONALISM IN AMERICA

1. A Word of Explanation	249
2. A Glance at the South	254
3. The Middle West	261
4. East and West	266

CHAPTER XV

THE GROWTH OF AMERICAN CULTURE

1. The Progress of Thought	271
2. Art in America	277
3. Our Literary Renaissance	286

CHAPTER XVI

JOURNALISM IN AMERICA

1. The Newspaper Machine	290
2. Moulders of Public Opinion	295
3. Mirrors of the World	301
4. Headlines	306

CONTENTS

v

CHAPTER XVII

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. From the Three R's to Everything | 311 |
| 2. Science and Education | 318 |
| 3. Criticism—What Is Education? | 324 |

CHAPTER XVIII

OUR COLORFUL ADVERTISING

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. The Advertising Age | 330 |
| 2. Bigger and Better | 334 |
| 3. Playing Upon Our Fears | 341 |
| 4. Some Wonders of Suggestion | 345 |

CHAPTER XIX

"LEADING CITIZENS" OFTEN MEDIOCRE

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Heroes of Success | 349 |
| 2. Megaphones of Mediocrity | 354 |
| 3. Soothsayers—Political and Religious | 359 |
| 4. Gadflies | 366 |

CHAPTER XX

AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Before and After 1914 | 368 |
| 2. The Dangers of Imperialism | 375 |
| 3. Our Need of World Culture | 380 |

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT IS "AMERICANISM"?

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. What Is "Americanism"? | 387 |
| 2. Conformity or Variety | 396 |
| 3. The Value of Criticism | 402 |

CHAPTER XXII

AMERICA, NEW AND OLD

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. The Past Is Dead, Yet Lives | 406 |
| 2. What Is Our Progress? | 416 |

The BIG AMERICAN PARADE

CHAPTER I

The Complex Background — The Variety and Conflict of Social Forces — Out of Which America Grew

1. OUR COMPLEX BACKGROUND

AMERICA has both the advantages and the disadvantages, the stimulation and the confusion, of a "live" subject. It is rich in immediate, stirring material, lying before our very eyes, attracting directly not merely our observation but also engaging our actions. It is a subject in motion and we move with it. We know more about it, having a closer view and a more intimate realization of it, and thus we have the vantage point of familiar and in some respects easy discussion. It is a subject that is being continually discussed in our literature, in our newspapers, in our political controversies, in our debating forums, in our theaters, in our personal conversations. On the other hand, we are so actively in the midst of the issues and features of life in America today—we are at the same time actors and observers—that we feel some sense of confusion, of being rushed, and whirled at times rather dizzily by the kaleidoscopic aspects of a subject that will not be still, conveniently rounded and complete, for our deliberate scrutiny. It is, in a word, an unfinished

subject. We are personally interested, and that will affect what we have to say about it. And we have to deal with many tendencies which are more or less uncertainly in the process of experimental working out. Yet if we lack perspective, we gain in human interest. If we have not the well-shaped form of a tale that is told, we have the vitality of a tale that is even now being lived. First and last, it is principally our business to use our eyes and see what is going on about us.

We shall not begin abruptly with the present hour. It will be useful to consider somewhat the complex background—the variety and conflict of social forces—out of which the America of today has grown. Historically, socially, geographically, America has furnished a contrast of environments. Its present variety cannot be understood properly without a knowledge of the diverse interests and characteristics that have attended every stage of its development. It was in the beginning the adventuring, treasure-seeking, trading, fighting ground of Spaniards, Frenchmen, Dutch and English. The men who settled America, first along the Atlantic coast and then steadily westward, had not simply to explore and cultivate and establish civilization in a vast new continent; but they had also to conquer a race already in possession—an unfamiliar race, strong and cunning, trained in an environment unlike anything the European settlers had known.

And colonial America, although not large in extent, stretching merely along the edge of the continent, was different in its nature from Massachusetts to Georgia. The stern Puritans of New England, the gentle Quakers of Pennsylvania, the mercantile and farming gentry of New York, the easy-going lords of slave-tilled plantations in the Southern colonies; these had not only, in many instances, a different background in Europe but a different

environment, a contrasting social and economic life, in the new country. Certain things they did have in common: defense of the colonies against the French and Indians; and, later, resistance to the political-commercial rule of England. They made fraternal cause in the struggle for independence, but they did not possess a similar culture, and they were to be brought still farther apart, even though identified, after some confusion and compromise, as the United States.

It is not even true that the sentiment of independence was a simple and complete bond among the American colonists. There was a very considerable and active element of Tories or royalists, who sympathized with and aided England in the Revolution—just as there were, in England, many who defended the colonists in their right to be free. It was natural, however, that Virginia planters and Massachusetts farmers and merchants, wide apart as they were in custom and viewpoint, should share the desire to develop and control a new life of their own in America; that self-interest as well as the idea of freedom (the latter being all the more important when we reflect that many had fled to America that they might escape persecution in Europe) should encourage the colonists finally to take their affairs in their own hands, make their own laws, and themselves govern the country they had developed. Yet even after the Revolution there was not, strictly speaking, a common country. Each colony had a separate, jealous psychology—physical isolation, in those days of slow communication, and peculiarities of environment were difficulties in the way of union; and when that union was consummated there was bequeathed to the future a long struggle over state and federal rights, a governmental issue that has its echo in the politics of our own day.

It was a strange compromise. There was a break with old-world tradition in the conception of political liberty (yet in the South slavery flourished as an important institution). The principle of religious liberty was embodied in the Constitution, yet a narrow spirit of intolerance prevailed in Puritan New England—a spirit that, indeed, was until quite recently dominant over American culture. Economic differences, between the manufacturing and mercantile North and the slave-based agricultural South, made what Lincoln was to call “a house divided against itself.” There were really two different systems of society—as distinct in manner of life, in interests, and in culture as could be—existing suspiciously and controversially under one government. Not without excellent reason did such men as Thomas Jefferson fear the slavery issue. It was an issue that overshadowed American life, and that compelled the anxious and acrimonious concern of the best brains of the country until past the middle of the nineteenth century. To be sure, slavery was not specifically an issue until the question arose of its extension to new territories or states. But the lines of political conflict were drawn from the beginning between North and South, and the struggle grew more ominous as the South, which had long been superior in the councils of the nation, felt with resentment and alarm the steadily rising power and wealth of the North. When the abolition movement took shape (although at first it was no less unpopular among the pillars of respectability in the North than in the South) passions were more bitterly aroused. And in the middle years of the century no other question approached slavery in importance, intensity of discussion, or sinister bearing upon the future. There is no doubt that this intensification of political interest, this narrow and concentrated sectional strife, was a hindrance to

broad, harmonious progress in American life. It was a source of constant confusion, divided purposes, and imminent disunion that had to be removed before the country could realize its larger destiny. The disadvantage, from a progressive point of view, lay more with the South, as its system of slavery was archaic and reactionary, incapable of producing progress, essentially contrary to new social and industrial tendencies; while the North, with its manufactures and free labor and varied commerce, moved more naturally and more rapidly with the modern times.

Yet, even as many of the colonists did not think of actual separation from England until the outbreak of the Revolution, so the step of completely abolishing slavery was an outcome of the Civil War and not a deliberate policy in its beginning. The chief struggle before the war was over the question of extending slavery to new territories. This geographical expansion was vitally necessary to the Southern system, which did not have the possibilities of internal development; while the sentiment against slavery (the sentiment, not for its abolition, but for its discouragement and restriction to the original slave-holding states) and fear of the political power of the South led the North to insist upon freedom as the future policy of the country. It is fairly certain (although conjectures about history are risky) that slavery would in time have yielded to the force of modern industry. The economic life of the South, its wealth and prospects, burdened with a reactionary system, were significantly in decay until the Civil War. If *Uncle Tom's Cabin* showed that slavery was a crime, *The Impending Crisis* (written by a Southerner) proved that slavery was a failure. It was spectacularly a moral issue, but fundamentally and inevitably it was an economic issue.

Although the main historic facts are known, it is useful to emphasize this long struggle. For, as I said, it interfered with the natural progress of the country. It forced an exaggerated preoccupation with politics, diverting the best minds from any possible interests (which under happier circumstances they might well have displayed) in creative culture. So that the leading literature was oratory, the leading intellectual questions were the ones debated by those same orators, of the Webster-Clay-Calhoun succession, and a wider thoughtful and artistic view of life was discouraged by these, among other, practical exigencies. When a country is divided so sharply and its mental energies are absorbed by a struggle for political control and over the form its society shall take, it has little time for that culture which comes with a settled maturity and well-marked, successful, broadly decided plan of civilization. America had, in a word, to put its house in order before it did anything else.

True, the belatedness of American culture was not wholly due to the absorption in the sectional or slavery issue. A detrimental influence on the moral side was that of Puritanism. It tended, on the one hand, to discourage an interest in beautiful things or an imaginative use of the materials of life, which were certainly rich and vivid, alive with poetic and dramatic themes, from the beginnings of the new country. And, on the other hand, it imposed narrow moral restrictions upon literature, a conventional colorlessness and reticence, a silence with regard to the fundamental passions of human nature, which tenaciously persisted until our own time. Finally, it was opposed on the intellectual side to the spirit of free inquiry, so that Puritanism and theology were combined as a cultural depressant in American life. The contradic-

tion in theory (but indeed the natural thing in practice) was that American life was all the while plentifully rough and virile and by no means so narrowly moral as the supremacy of the Puritan tradition might, at first glance, suggest.

It may be reasonably assumed that the supremacy of Puritanism would not have been so easily maintained had the American mind been free to interest itself specially in literature, thought, and culture. The fact is that culture, which belongs really to a developed civilization, was held back by physical conditions. The great enterprise which attracted American energy and imagination was that of pioneering, of settling this immense, raw continent, of building a mighty material structure which, once fully emergent, could sustain a life of broader and more cultural interests. Politics, the "westward ho" of pioneer settlement, and the building of industry gave America enough to do and to think about.

2. "THE GILDED AGE"

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the contrasts of our complex background were picturesque and extreme. In the Northeast a well-defined commercial society, strongly influenced in its culture by the Puritanism of New England—in the Southeast a society of aristocratic agriculturists, masters lording it elegantly over large plantations tilled by slaves, a society that was medieval in many of its ideas—in the eastern Mississippi Valley a society that was scarce a generation removed from pioneering—in the western Mississippi Valley a frontier society with a mingling of civilized traditions, lawless adventuring, and a rudely primitive struggle with nature—farther west a society in which Indians might still be called the "ruling class," a society of Indian fighters, pio-

neer traders and (after 1849) gold miners, with all the wild elements of frontier mining camps. The country was thinly and sporadically settled—it was still for the most part virgin soil—only in the East was there a distinctly organized, really settled social life, and in the Southeast the life of cities and trade was poorly developed. That America was a gigantic puzzle to foreigners, who scarcely knew how to put together the scattered and incongruous pieces.

Following the Civil War, there was in the North and West a quickened impulse of expansion. Free land, with the prospect of economic freedom and a new life, brought westward a constant flow of settlers. The Mississippi Valley grew rapidly in population and wealth, stimulated by railroads and the emerging industrial life that brought with it new vitality, new opportunities, and new social forms in the latter half of the century. The South, unfortunately, did not share in this post-war progress. It had been left desolate by the war, and, to make matters worse, it suffered the cruel fate of a conquered country, exploited recklessly by the “carpet-baggers” (political grafters and adventurers from the North, who took advantage of the helplessness of the South). The South had been predominantly an agricultural region, and it could not at once throw off the old psychology and habits of the slave régime. Whereas the North was thoroughly at home in industry and commerce, the South had to learn slowly and with difficulty these new interests, and it is only in the twentieth century that it has caught the spirit of industrial progress. The South looked back, vainly regretting the vanished splendors of ante-bellum days—the North and West looked forward, not being called upon to build a new society upon the ruins of an old one, but rather to develop their

society, based upon free labor and the interests of industry and trade, in a natural way.

That has been called "the Gilded Age"—not very accurately, for it was more energetic than refined, was more coarse and adventurous than in any sense gilded, truly an inchoate period. It has been more appropriately called the age of industrial and financial buccaneering. Great fortunes were made swiftly, recklessly, unscrupulously, and there were still wilder dreams of fortune. The upbuilding of industry was far from scientific in spirit, although in the nature of things, despite all the waste and graft and the financial-gambling spirit that dominated the rise of industry, there was development. It was a period of scramble and gamble, inferior in ethical standards and economic science, but nevertheless a period that practically accomplished a great deal. It was a period of actual building and expansion, although at the same time of selfish, unscientific financial manipulation—of fierce and destructive competition—of floating new enterprises (on the deep sea of "watered stock") for the sake of financial trickery—of building with the object of wrecking. However, the building was material and lasting. The wrecking was in the jugglery of artificial money values. Railroads and factories appeared to stay—the industrializing of the country proceeded irresistibly—a changed order, in spite of all the confusion, was being solidly evolved in America.

It was a time when luck or cunning seized comparatively easy and quick rewards. It was a time when a new class arose, generally from quite humble origins, taking shrewd advantage of the early opportunities in that chaotic period when it was surely "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." And the "plutocracy" became, certainly in respect of power, the real "aristoc-

racy." When competition was really free, when the new industrial society was still in the process of experimentation and formation, when the element of adventure was considerable, there were many bold, scheming, not too nicely conscientious men who laid the foundations of fortunes that are in our day imposing and respectable. As a few centuries earlier many fortunes had been gained by piracy on the highways of the sea, so now what amounted to piracy on the recently and not clearly marked highways of industry and finance (although in line with the broad tendencies of economic growth) yielded dazzling fortunes to adventurers who came often, uncouth but cunningly resourceful, from the farms and small towns. As it was a brand-new and irresponsibly individualistic game, a field scarcely touched by the slow-lagging law, there were no rules save to beat the other fellow and take all that the traffic would bear.

The industrial greed, trickery and lawlessness had its reflection in political graft. Bribery was common. Corruption was the rule. There was scarcely even the poor pretense of a civic conscience. Special privileges, franchises, monopoly advantages were bought and sold. The protection of social rights was an idea which, though it was conspicuous (but not so clearly scientific) in the propaganda of dawning radicalism, was cynically ignored by the industrial and political leaders.

There was indeed, at the close of the old century, even in those anti-social and socially uneducated days, a great deal of popular discontent. It had the disadvantage of not really understanding the economic tendencies against which it complained. Insofar as it was of an agricultural and middle-class character, it was reactionary in spirit, striving vainly to recall the days of small industry and simple, fairly equal competition. And this struggle

against rising monopoly, against large-scale production and the concentration of industrial power, against trusts and corporations, was inevitably a failure. The development was, on its human side, unscrupulous and marked by a great deal of injustice, dishonesty and cruelty—but it was the direction in which industry powerfully and logically moved, although an enlightened and scientific social conscience would have guided it more happily.

There was a curious, naïve tone of dismal prophecy among radicals in the nineties. There were some who believed that a frightful social revolution was only a few years distant; or that the republic was entering a period of vicious wealth and tyranny and inequality under the weight of which it would speedily collapse, and there were eloquent parallels drawn with the decay and fall of ancient empires. And there were fanciful pictures of an increasingly brutalized and degraded mass of workers, without hope or liberty, crushed under the juggernaut of plutocratic industry. It was felt by many that civilization was about to go down in general wreck and ruin, instead of going forward to greater freedom, more just and efficient order, and a progressively scientific grasp of and outlook upon life.

It is of course easy to understand how the pessimistic note was sounded in such a period of painful change. The workers were poorly organized and had little or no protection from the laws, and they found it harder to deal with huge, impersonal corporations than with individual employers. The middle class and the farmers were faced with unfamiliar difficulties, with extortionate trade practices and financial jugglery. Many who had been owners of small industries were completely ruined. Panics swept the country fatally. City, state, and national governments were openly servile to the plutocratic interests—

the ruling Republican party, which had been the political offspring of Abolitionism and Unionism, traded demagogically upon its war record and, in cynical practice, served the interests of "wealth against commonwealth." It was the period, politically, of "the bloody shirt"—in other words, the Civil War was fought again (with oratory) in each campaign. This was a cheap way of diverting attention from more important economic issues.

Those who were moved to protest had, as we have seen, a lack of sympathy with and understanding of industrial evolution and were additionally confused by the long and curious agitation over the money question. It cannot be said that they had a clear, reasoned social viewpoint. Socialism was the most intelligent radical propaganda of the time, with an evolutionary outlook, but it was foreign to the individualistic psychology of America, its influence was slight, and its leaders did not realize the possibilities of growth and efficiency in the new capitalistic system—a system which they sometimes pictured as collapsing almost before it had well established itself. In short, social philosophy and political idealism were very faint and vague—the individualistic attitude still prevailed in a period of strongly advancing monopoly—the importance (or the power) of farms and villages, whence had come the support for Populism and the Bryan crusades, decreased as the factories and cities rapidly grew.

Yet during this industrial development large areas of the continent were still unsettled or but sparsely populated, undeveloped, and living in semi-primitive fashion. The struggle against the Indians was still going on in the Far West, and rude, picturesque, pioneer conditions still prevailed, at the same time that industrialism was having its phenomenal growth in the older parts of the country.

It was still a country of "magnificent distances" and amazing contrasts. The West, with its cowboys and outlaws and miners, its open spaces both wide and wild, was separated by more than geographical distance from the settled and traditional East, and from the Middle West with its contrasts of rural simplicity and rising industrial activity. The immense unsettled territory in America made still more fantastic the idea of a social revolution. The frontier still offered a way of escape. Freedom and breathing space for individualism could be had by moving farther on. Capitalism would not be likely to collapse when it had barely scratched the surface of a small part of the country. And even today "the wide open spaces" is a phrase of reality outside of the extremely congested, metropolitan East.

Culturally, the situation in America during the so-called "Gilded Age" was not admirable. The majority of Americans were indifferent to the rest of the world, provincial and self-sufficient, incurious about history, science, art or literature. Their chief intellectual interest (although one could hardly give it so dignified a name) was in politics. They had the virtues and the defects of the active transitional period in which they lived. They were hustling, practical, ambitious—they were drawn completely to the life of action, they were building a new social structure as well as settling and civilizing a new country—they did not have, in short, a rich, finished, leisurely civilization in which culture and the reflective life could readily find a place. And on the farms, in the villages, where the pace of life was slower, there was a provincial isolation which was equally foreign to the growth of culture.

There are still isolated parts of the country which have hardly been touched by modern knowledge and a

genuinely civilized point of view. The rise of city life and the advance in social organization—with modern means of communication and transportation—have, however, created an atmosphere stimulating to larger interests. And while this is certainly the most active age of all, most materially busy and productive, it is a mature, well-defined civilization, with greatly increased prosperity and leisure, and therefore more varied, inquiring, and cultured in its interests. It is also to be remembered that within the past quarter of a century science has marvelously brought the world closer together and has not only increased the knowledge of man in many new directions but has also increased the facilities for spreading that knowledge. It is an age of awakened civilization, worldwide, closely communicating, infinitely curious and resourceful.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, America was not only a land still largely unsettled, the scene of social-industrial beginnings that naturally attracted its greatest energy, concerned with working out its own internal destiny and little bothered by international affairs—but, like the rest of the world, it was really only in the beginning of the scientific age. A wonderful beginning, yet science was far more brilliantly to enlighten, accelerate, and organize in continuous, swift-flashing, common intelligence the life of the world. The growth of American society out of the experimental, settling stage to a flourishing maturity, and the simultaneous world influence of scientific progress, have resulted in greater activity, wider leisure, and more richly expansive, more intelligent, more cultural interests. This could be called “the Golden Age” more fairly than the half century following the Civil War could be called “the Gilded Age.”

3. MODERN AMERICA

In the period that has just been surveyed, America saw the rise of industrialism and machine production; the appearance of novel scientific inventions, such as the telephone and telegraph; the building of thousands of miles of railroad, linking remote parts of the country; in short, the beginnings, the first steps, the introductory features of a new social life, which, however, was not prophetically envisaged (at least by the average American) as the massive, splendid spectacle of modern America. Roughly speaking, it is the twentieth century that has seen the birth or the creation of a new world, and that prompts 1929 to look back at 1900 as a strange, distant period of almost foreign life. It is equally true that a man suddenly transferred from the scenes of 1900 to the scenes of today would be overcome with bewilderment.

The most obvious changes are mechanical (and they are indeed responsible for the other changes). It was only in part—principally in production—that 1900 could be said to have had a mechanical civilization. Life was still in many respects simple. The infinite number of mechanical conveniences and comforts, extending to almost every feature of daily life, which are commonplace today were not known in 1900. Men worked with machines in factories (not comparable, however, to our great modern machines) but science had not mechanically revolutionized the common life, saving effort and increasing comfort, as it has in the present century. The use of electricity, as a widespread means of light and power for the average man, is a development of the past quarter of a century. It was unfamiliar to most people in 1900. The automobile has most dramatically changed the spectacle of life in our time. It was, at the beginning of the century,

a peculiar "fad," skeptically regarded by the majority. The horse and buggy was still the common dependence for travel. Automobiles were few and were objects of curious gaze. Now the situation is reversed. A horse and buggy is almost a novelty—it certainly is so on the streets of a large city—while the automobile is ubiquitous, and accepted by us as familiarly as if it had always been an indispensable, natural feature of our lives. And the airplane, quite a twentieth century product, is becoming familiar, less a novelty. An age-long dream of man, this mastery of the air, and yet we have quickly taken it as a matter of course.

In this respect, our age is more scientifically minded. The average man today, however little he may understand science and however far he may be from intellectual sympathy with the scientific viewpoint, has not the same tendency toward amazement at new things. In 1900 the possibilities of science were scarcely realized by the average man—his belief in those possibilities was quite limited and tentative—and he was easily astonished. Now we expect science to provide us continually with greater wonders. We seldom hear any more the old saying, "It can't be done." The radio is truly recognized as a marvel. But it is instantly put to use in a very matter-of-fact way and becomes almost overnight a household necessity. The moving picture (technically if not yet artistically great) is another twentieth century development—it was a rarely seen novelty early in the century—and now we have, not particularly to our surprise, the talking pictures. Television is another natural thing which we readily accept as belonging to our scientific age. In the first years of the century, scientific inventions seemed uncanny and unnatural. We regard them as natural, and we depend more and more upon mechanics in our life.

Men have acquired, within a few decades, the habits and the viewpoint of a mechanical civilization.

This mechanical change—this enormous increase of the facilities of average daily life—has been felt by the farms and small towns, although, naturally, this modern America offers a more stupendous and complicated spectacle in the large cities. The importance of city life, however, is one of the significant facts of our civilization. The great city is the natural product of a rich and cultured society, and it is there, in the centers of trade and industry, where hundreds of thousands or millions of people are brought together in a closely organized common life, that we find the most spectacular evidences of our mechanical age. It is there that we observe the rich material variety of life in the modern world and also are directly in contact with the currents of modern enterprise and culture. All parts of the world, we may say, meet in the larger American cities.

Mechanical changes—the growth of industry, the development of rapid means of travel and communication, the automobile, the radio, the movies—have naturally brought what may be more broadly called social changes. America today has not only a strikingly different external appearance than it presented at the beginning of the century, but it has a different psychology, a changed outlook upon life, new standards. We shall find, of course, as we go more extensively into the subject of America today, that there is a great variety of thought and sentiment in our country. There are differences of environment and tradition, of social behavior, of political and religious belief, and the like. So that we do not assume a simple, complete unanimity of viewpoint in America today, any more than we assume such a complete agreement of thought or feeling in the America of 1900. Even so,

there has undeniably been a broad change of attitude. Obviously, the rich and swift-moving materialism of our day has swept aside, as a ruling social force, the narrow Puritanism which so long dominated the country. That Puritanism still has its eloquent advocates, and no doubt many take it as a rule of life, but its once extensive and arbitrary influence has ceased, and today one may easily ignore it, and indeed by ignoring it be more in accord with the spirit of the times.

Life is freer—yes, even after the passing of that old, simple, sturdy individualism of earlier America. We certainly have a more systematized and regulated collective life, as a means of efficiency and order. But this is not an interference with our true personal liberty, which is greater than ever—and one can say this in spite of the special feature of Prohibition, which is openly flouted by the free spirit of America, and in spite of the various reform laws and agitations, which do not represent the general attitude of America today.

It should be emphasized, too, that this greater freedom of our day is not the result of any legislation nor propaganda. It is simply a natural change in viewpoint—an alteration in our ideas of behavior—which came gradually and was scarcely realized by the moral and social prophets until it was already well advanced. It is the result of a richer, more brilliant materialistic life. Our interests have widened, the possibilities of pleasure and the stimulations of desire have been vastly increased, and this has inspired a more liberal attitude. If a narrow morality is produced by a narrow environment, then the reverse is equally true.

Broadly speaking, the America of today has also a different attitude toward politics, toward religion, toward culture, toward family life, toward industry. It may well

be said that it talks, acts and looks to be a very different America from that of 1900. These things, however, will have their proper place in the following chapters. It is enough here to suggest, in an introductory way, the fact that American life has undergone remarkable changes in the first three decades of the present century. And so, with a broad picture of the complex background of American history—with some essential understanding of the peculiar forces and conditions that have shaped American thought and directed American progress—we can turn our gaze wholly upon the present and consider the living spectacle of America today. We shall have the advantage that we need principally to use our eyes: although in some of our judgments and sympathies we are quite likely to differ. Yet we shall remember that facts are of first importance; and we shall try to stick mainly to a faithful description.

CHAPTER II

The Truth of the Charge of “Materialism” Is Something Upon Which America Is Ready to Accept Congratulations

1. “COLOSSUS OF THE NORTH”

A GREAT deal of nonsense is written about the love of country. It is confused with belief in certain ideas prevalent in the country, with uncritical acceptance of the country's institutions and *mores*, with submission to whatever a ruling group or a majority may decide (submission, that is to say, without protest), with sharing the popular hero-worship, with approving governmental policies—and so on, irrelevantly. Irrelevantly, for while we may argue about the patriotic importance of these attitudes, they have no essential connection with the love of country. If we look at it dispassionately, we must see that it is not a peculiar virtue for a man to have an affection for his country. It is, after all, a profound sense of familiarity—familiar ways, familiar speech, familiar scenes. “Patriotism,” said Ingersoll (who was, however, a vigorous flag-waver), “is the prejudice of birth, the mere animal attachment to place.”

It is natural. It is the feeling of home. It is commonly observed not only in attachment to a country, but to a state, a city, or a particular area of the countryside. The error arises in confusing this sentiment with one's intellectual—especially one's political and social—viewpoint. Such differences in viewpoint do not imply a greater or less feeling of attachment to the country in which a man

has been born and reared; unless indeed the critic of his country's institutions may insist that he is animated by the most sensitive and thoughtful patriotism, that his love of country is most convincingly shown by objecting to what he regards as unworthy or harmful.

An American may be proud of the vastness of his country—yet be ashamed of many aspects of intellectual narrowness or petty standards of life. It is, after all, the kind of life which is found in this vast America that is important. One may be proud of the strength of one's country—yet wish to see that strength used for peace and justice, and be aroused to shame and indignation when that strength is employed oppressively. One may be thrilled by the natural beauty of a state or district, yet be depressed by the poorness of the culture and social life. Thus a Tennessean may love his native hills, yet wish intensely that the state be more civilized—and blush at the ignominy of a Scopes trial. One may expose the bunk in American life, yet none the less clearly appreciate the interesting features, the solid achievements, the rich advantages and the intelligent influences of American society.

So we are “patriotic” in recognizing the greatness of America—its natural immensity and variety and its developed greatness. We are better pleased, however, to waive the question of patriotism (too doubtful a word and too much abused by “patriots”) and let ourselves be guided by realistic description. The magnificent physical sweep of these United States—“from the rocky coast of Maine to the sunny slopes of California,” as the spellbinders used to say—is no more to the credit of contemporary Americans than it was to the credit of the Indian aborigines. There is more occasion for pride in what Americans (aided, to be sure, by the mingling of many

streams of immigration) have done with their natural advantages. Yet even here individual or patriotic egotism should be quietly self-restrained. Not that American achievements have been lacking in greatness, but that our individual share in them is relatively small and America has, in a sense, followed impersonally the evolutionary way of all life. If personal eulogy is in order, it belongs to a few thinkers, scientists, and creative builders. What is called the spirit of America—its individualism, its free and wide-ranging energy, its ambition, its large scale of doing things—is a reflection of physical conditions: geographical, economic, social. We are fortunate in the massive, roomy theater that nature provided for our activities. We have tremendous sources of wealth, and our economic development has been favored by time, coinciding with the scientific release of new forces—indeed America's economic, social, political, and religious life was born and developed favorably (which does not mean perfectly) under the influence of the modern spirit. Our American civilization is great chiefly because it is a *modern* civilization. Time, place, and a happy conjunction of natural and social forces have shaped our destiny.

We owe a great deal to our position on the map of the world. Protected by two broad oceans, unhampered by the close pressure of any other powerful nation, the United States have been able to progress freely in their own way. They have not been constantly threatened by strife, embroiled in the rivalries and intrigues that have marked the history of European countries, concerned with the problems of an uneasy "balance of power" on a continent hopelessly divided into hostile national groups. The comparison with Europe, geographically and politically, favors America at every point. We have an enormous country with a common language and institutions;

working in political union, with broadly the same laws and customs (our state and sectional differences are of course not so wide and troublesome as the national and racial differences of Europe); with free intercourse and trade among our many states—not cramped by the tariff barriers of Europe. We have been happily served by the policy (which was obviously dictated by our situation) of political “isolation”—that is to say, of attending to our own business and applying ourselves to internal development rather than to external struggle and conquest: a policy that has been, in our hemisphere, sometimes violated but that has, even so, been distinctively American as compared with the complex international intrigue and strife which has, undoubtedly, been a terrible hindrance to the progress of Europe. Justice has not always guided America’s foreign policy but—looking at the selfish side—the country has not exhausted itself and diverted energy from its own proper affairs by war on the European scale. One need only ask what would have been the history of America had it been separated into a number of major, independent powers and had there been several conflicts comparable to the Civil War. In the light of that tragedy, out of which America came as finally a firmly united commonwealth, we can appreciate the good fortune, the stimulation to freedom and progress, of having a single great nation.

Again fortunately our Northern and Southern borders are not menaced by great, hostile powers. We have been in a position of perfect security. No foreign threats or distractions have interfered with the constructive life of the Republic. On the contrary, our Republic—the overshadowing “Colossus of the North”—has at times seemed quite threatening to our Southern neighbors.

Such trouble as America will have it must, indeed, go

forth to seek, following the investments of American capital: and this is a seriously debated issue, liberals insisting upon the policy of letting private capital bear its own risks. It is a new danger, born of modern conditions, conditions to which the world has not yet learned to scientifically adjust itself. Our geographical position favors peace and the progressive management of our national life. The intricate and farflung connections of world trade carry with them the perils of foreign war—not for America's national welfare, not for any just popular cause, not dictated by America's natural situation and genuinely human interests, but for the advantage of private capitalistic groups. It is a vital test of democracy. Will there be sensible popular control of the nation's foreign policy (will those who must, in the disastrous event, do the fighting decide, as rightly they should, the issue of peace or war), will we stay at home and keep safely and usefully busy with the constructive realities of life? Or will America forfeit its domestic security and interests to the sinister advancement of a commercially imperialistic policy? Will the Colossus use its strength properly in self-development or will it risk its strength beyond the seas?

A glance at America's favored place on the map of the world would be deceptive without an emphasis upon this other question, which is more vital after the breaking of old traditions in 1917. There is no fact more important, and which should be more clearly kept in mind, than the fact that the progress, prosperity and freedom enjoyed by America, in the past and the present, has been due to its continental unity, its distance from the major theater of war, its safe removal from the constant temptation or necessity to waste its energy in bitter strife. With respect to war and the tortuous, embroiling ways of diplomacy, "isolation" is a rational, ardently a desirable

policy for America. Culturally, the policy of world sympathy and understanding—a humane, intelligent awareness of the culture of other nations—will of course encourage the policy of peaceful “isolation.”

The physical characteristics of America afford the means of a diverse, vital, and abundant life: mighty mountain ranges, broad fertile plains, rich and magnificent valleys, forests (now wisely conserved), extensive waterways (and water power)—large rivers and the great inland lakes: it has a wide variety of soil, landscape and climate. It was called, in distinction from Europe, the New World—and it *is* a world, capable of sustaining independently a great civilization. Economically, the rest of the world is more dependent upon America than America is upon the world. This is chiefly due, of course, to the industrial and technical superiority of America. There has been and is a free flow of economic enterprise, made possible by our political unity. The raw materials and products of America include practically everything (and in abundance) necessary to the simplest elemental needs and the most elaborate industrial needs of life. It has in prodigious quantity and variety the means of food, clothing and shelter and the countless articles of modern scientific manufacture. Here is the most gigantic industrial country of all history—the country in which the modern scheme of life has been carried to its highest and most ingeniously organized level—and yet it is also a country of immense agricultural production. It can make ready use, within its own borders, of every important material of livelihood or creative power, so that from farms and factories issue steadily streams of multifarious wealth.

This many-sided economic life creates different phases of social life. There are contrasts of factory life, commercial life, mining life, farm life, ranch life, and the more

primitive hunting life. Yet there is a solid, recognizable vein (or veins) of common life running through all the diversity of the American scene. Americans from the four corners of the Republic are easily at home with one another—at least, there is a ground of ready-established familiarity between them which would not be true of average Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen and Italians. They may argue and even quarrel bitterly over controversial questions, but they have, in outline if not in detail, a similar background. Americans follow the same news of national politics—and sport—and scandal; see the same moving pictures—and talk about the respective merits (mainly pulchritudinous) of the well-known stars; hear the same kind of entertainment over the radio—enjoying programs from New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, New Orleans; discuss the same leading men and issues of the hour—with plenty to say about Al Smith and Hoover wherever two sovereign citizens meet; wear, generally speaking, the same kind of clothes; use nationally standardized articles of every description; have about the same disinclination to fraternize with policemen and (if they are that kind) the same inclination to fraternize with bootleggers; their slang, their “wise cracks,” their daily “small change” of allusion, all are similar. There is indeed frequent complaint about this standardization of American life: a tendency that is bad when it approaches an unoriginal, echoing sameness of thought and behavior, but that is a sound tendency with regard to things of merely convenient, material use.

There is, even so, a wide range of interesting differences in American life, which the observant fellow cannot fail to see as he travels for days, through changing scenes, natural and social, over the broad landscape of these States, many in one, with intriguing differences yet fa-

miliarly noted similarities—a strange, great, and continually interesting country. It was the literary imagination of Thoreau that led him to exclaim that Americans, inspired by the vastness and scenic grandeur of their country, should be moved to lofty thought and ideals, should have a mystic uplift of the spirit. Not even the love of nature common to all men has that spiritual potency. There can be more vision and sensitiveness in a civilized habitué of the sidewalks of New York than in a primitive dweller among the beautiful hills of Tennessee. Culture is more important than scenery in the realization of Thoreau's dream. Yet the immensity and variety of America have produced many currents of powerful, contrasting and infinitely curious life.

2. AMERICAN MATERIALISM

It is frequently said, in a tone of solemnly adverse judgment, that America is "materialistic." Some foreigners make the charge enviously. Home-grown preachers thus accuse piously. It is just about as remarkable as it would be to say that Americans are people. America is certainly not more materialistic than England at one end of the scale or Bulgaria at the other end. America is a mighty workshop—yes. It is, both in size and technical organization, the supreme example of an industrial country in a pre-eminently industrial age. It is more scientifically, successfully materialistic than other countries. Its materialism is more pronounced because of its greater natural advantages. Compared to other nations, technically also advanced and having an industrial system of the first order—such nations as Germany, England, France—America is a large national workshop by the side of smaller ones. The machine worker is not more

materialistic than the old hand worker—he simply produces a far greater abundance of materials.

When English critics speak of the materialism of America, one wonders. If they refer to its immense activity of trade, one wonders if they have forgotten that England was known long ago as "the nation of shopkeepers." (Not that the charge was a discreditable one; that nation of "shopkeepers" led the rest of Europe in liberalism, and responded more favorably to the influences of the modern age.) Again, England is more narrowly industrial than America. This country has a far more extensive agricultural life, and in many states industry is in the inferior place. This, however, is not a distinction between "materialism" and whatever may be its opposite. Agriculture is just as materialistic as industry. Primitive life is just as materialistic as civilized life—more so, for in civilization we have wider interests of culture as well as a more varied and abundant production of material things.

It is a healthy, intelligent materialism that we have in America. The only thing which can be alleged against it—and that, as we shall see in the further reaches of our survey, is sufficiently serious—is that this materialism is not fully nor justly enjoyed by all. There is no fault sensibly to be found with America's wealth; what is wrong is the poverty and the economic uncertainty that still exist within our country's borders. Speaking generally (taking the nation as a whole and leaving aside for the moment such inequalities as undeniably exist), it is a very good thing that America has, let us say, the healthy materialism of wealth rather than the sickly materialism of poverty; that it has the sound materialism of comfort rather than the rotten, rickety materialism of discomfort and sordidness; that it has the flourishing materialism of an effi-

ciently organized and progressive life rather than the stagnant materialism of a country living wretchedly, working hard and producing little. What is striking about American materialism is its success; its power; its firm grasp of the modern conditions of life. It is naturally the scene in which these modern conditions, of scientific organization of life and creative industry, have had the greatest room for expansion. Suppose science had been delayed another century or two; suppose that America were a country of agriculture and the elementary trade of pre-scientific times; it would not have been less materialistic. It is sometimes intimated that America today is materialistic in a peculiar and aggravated sense which was not true of an older America. Yet our ancestors worked longer hours and were more narrowly absorbed in struggling with the physical conditions of life. They had less leisure; less enjoyment; a less brilliant and varied spectacle of life to enliven their days.

It is of course easy for America to dismiss this charge of "materialism." Busy and successful, it persists in its course. It has the resources of nature, machinery, organization, labor power—it is independent and in a position of economic supremacy—it is getting results, and there is no marked tendency to be dissatisfied with the national spirit of "materialism": rather, the dissatisfaction is expressed—and fairly so—by those who are denied a goodly, sufficient share in the nation's wealth. The truth of the charge of "materialism" is something upon which America is ready to accept congratulations rather than condemnations.

It is noteworthy, too, that the spirit of industrial enterprise, the modern "materialistic" tendency of life, the urge toward a scientific production of things, grows throughout the world. Modernism is shaking the fabric

of ancient things in China. Russia, having overthrown by a prodigious, violent effort the medieval system in which it lingered far behind the rest of the world, is patterning after America in technical, materialistic plans if not in social-political ideas. (And it is, by the way, of the technical progress of American life that we speak in terms not merely of defense but of admiration; social questions relate not to some scheme of life *less* materialistic but to the juster *human* management of this material life; whether the machinery of production and distribution be privately or publicly owned—or, as we observe in America today, there is a tendency to recognize both principles—there is no real argument as to the superiority of the future growth of a mechanical civilization.) Throughout the world man is stimulated by a desire to realize more fully the solid advantages of modern life. It can hardly be said that America stands alone in having a large concern for material wealth and welfare; and that the rest of the world is indifferent on this score—with mystic, unworldly interests that do not immediately nor very definitely suggest themselves; no—we simply see that America leads the rest of the world in the universal march of material progress. The world wants the products of American machines—and similar machines for its own use. The factories of America send around the world a steady stream of goods. The critics of American “materialism” are eager to share in the results of that “materialism”—and in every country making any pretensions to progressive life there is the urge to do likewise, to adopt these materialistic standards.

One cannot, to be sure, speak in a vein of loose optimism about the American standard of living. There are different standards for the rich, for the middle class, for the skilled workers, for the so-called “white collar” class,

for the unskilled laborers, and (if they can be said to have a "standard") for the unemployed. Yet, class for class, it is undeniable that American standards are attractively higher than in any other country. It can fairly be called, not absolutely but relatively, the land of prosperity and opportunity. The average American has more comfort, better conditions of labor, a fairer, more substantial, and more hopeful life than his fellow in England, France, Germany, Italy—than his fellow anywhere. These superior conditions have indeed drawn millions from the poorer, more crowded countries to America. American "materialism" has been the powerful magnet that has attracted the vast flood of immigration. The world not only depends upon American trade, but its millions have crossed the seas to find places in the national workshop.

There has been a great deal of exaggeration. Many immigrants have found anything but prosperity and freedom in our steel mills and coal mines and sweat-shops. But many others have prospered, have realized the dream of education, have rejoiced in a much freer social atmosphere—and many have shrewdly, enterprisingly made a success in trade. So that Americans have objected, not very reasonably, that foreigners are too forward in money-making. (It may be said, parenthetically, that they have not the false pride which Americans have, but will work—profitably, too—at occupations which Americans consider beneath their dignity. The former do not realize the burdens and restrictions under which the latter have lived, and that any chance means freedom and opportunity to them.) At any rate, although Americanization has often and too extensively meant a harsh kind of exploitation—although our steel mills and coal mines (which are, however, below the level of American indus-

try generally in their working conditions) have swallowed Moloch-like many poor foreigners—there is a great deal to be said for the view of America as the land of opportunity. It has proved itself that to millions.

We return, however, to the solid fact that the “materialism” of America is predominantly sound and successful and the great means of future hope. We have to consider more honestly and deliberately the ethics of distribution. Or it may be said that we need, from the viewpoint of society, a more scientific distribution of wealth. But what makes this question vital is our basic power of production. If America were a poor country, if it lacked the wonderful machinery and technique of “materialism,” the question of fair distribution would not be vital nor hopeful. As it is, this flourishing materialism, with all its defects and inequalities, means certainly a higher average life.

Fundamentally, American “materialism” is good. Yet there is another side, which does not involve the question of whether this “materialism” is good or bad, but rather our attitude toward it. Those realistic critics who object to a narrow, exclusive interest in business, in making and selling things, are of course right and their protest is culturally a healthful one. There is certainly a gospel of success widely proclaimed in America which slights the importance of culture—of mental growth and independence —of inner character; which encourages too narrowly the aggressive and acquisitive traits that mark the “go-getter.” This means, really, that some very excellent aspects of a well-rounded materialism are neglected. For culture, artistic and intellectual interests, a richer personal life mentally and emotionally, a social life of many-sided cultivation and broad outlook is the lofty completion of the materialistic structure. It is finely made possi-

ble by the basic materialism of wealth-getting, of comfort, of a technically well-arranged life. The man who thinks only of accumulating dollars and surrounding himself with costly, ostentatious possessions has an incomplete view of materialism, and a view, too, which tends to grow stale and unsatisfactory. "*Business before pleasure*" is an inaccurate motto. Americans have room both for business and pleasure in their daily lives. And they also have room both for business and culture. There are many cultured business men, and we do not observe that they are less successful than the uncultured Babbitts. On the contrary, the former get more out of life—their materialism yields them full returns. They have the foundation of success and the superstructure of culture.

Yet while the criticism of Babbitry, of the "go-getting" mania, of the over-simplified success gospel, is a sound and useful criticism, insofar as it realistically exposes an undeniable phase of American life, it is also true that "materialism" has produced a more mature and extensive culture in our country. There is more intellectual life, a more wide-ranging lively discussion of ideas—more significant movements of culture in America today than in the older, less richly "materialistic" America. This growth of culture is not something to view complacently, but rather to be increased with vision and enthusiasm. This side of life is still too much neglected in America. But it is only fair to recognize that our civilization, materially great, opens new possibilities for life in every direction. There is a quickening of mental curiosity as well as of material energy. Wealth stimulates art and literature and knowledge and the more esthetic, beauty-creating social activities.

3. THE GREAT PARADE

We may look at American life picturesquely as a great, brilliant, tireless, multifarious parade. It has crazy aspects, and stupid aspects. It is sometimes gaudy, sometimes blatant. It has many elements of childishness, strangely contrasting with its intelligent efficiency and power in many respects. Many—or most—of the people in the parade do not know just where they are going, but they are spiritedly in motion none the less. Whatever one may say about this great American parade, it never lacks in interest—its very stupidities are often amusing, while its follies present ingenious features and are, to say the least, entertaining. America is the most thoroughly alive—the most gaily and hopefully alive—country in the world today. One thinks of the rich life, universal in character, that streamed through Rome in its golden age. Yet that was nothing to the rich, diverse, spectacular life, drawn from a larger world and multiplied in its variety by the creativeness of modern scientific civilization, which flows throughout this broad land of America today. It has—this American civilization—the energy of youth and the sophistication of maturity. It is boastful and naïve, yet withal shrewd and humorous; selfish, and at times cruel, but on the whole, good-natured; very busy, but also very playful.

For to call America a vast workshop—and to add nothing to that characterization—would be extremely misleading. Certainly, work is seen on a more tremendous, complicated scale in America today than in any other land or time; and work, too, that is immeasurably greater in its results. It is machinery, of course, that is responsible for this enormous increase of productive life. Men work shorter hours, and have more leisure and more

spirit for play. When men worked fifteen hours a day, the world was not nearly the scene of activity that it is today when men work eight hours. Our American ancestors toiled more for the necessities than we in America today for a longer bill of necessities and an added bill of luxuries. So, while America is a vast workshop, while it presents a scene of prodigious labor that is historically without precedent (and, in view of its size and development, without contemporary equal), that is because it has so amazingly the machinery for work.

Actually, America today is the most lively playground in the world. The foreign traveler to our country is impressed first by the great industrial activity, by the power and scope of our productive life. And then he is struck, perhaps even more forcefully, by the sight of America at play—by the remarkable place that leisure, recreation, amusement has in the common life of America—by the gay “off duty” parade which alternates brightly with the parade to and from work. He would find, upon a closer study, that there is a different attitude toward work and play. Before the day of mechanical facilities, when life was real and life was earnest in the Longfellowish sense, there was an unpleasantly solemn conception of duty and thrift and unrelieved application to tasks that must be kept at slowly and patiently. That was the day when the saying was devoutly believed that “Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do” (although we might discriminate as to what idleness is, pointing out that to amuse oneself, to find in play a regeneration of the spirits, is not to be idle). That is a broad picture, of course. But it is true that a more serious, intent concentration upon the virtue and necessity of toil, self-denial, and a sober dutiful life was a prevailing note; naturally, because men had to work harder for the means of living and they lacked the mani-

fold easy opportunities for pleasure that are readily at hand in America today.

Now, we certainly do not live in an idle age. The work that America does is greater than ever. But it is done more quickly, more efficiently, with more for enjoying life. And among the results of this work is the production of facilities for play and amusement—facilities conveniently and cheaply available to the average man—which were not dreamed of a few decades ago. It has happened therefore that Americans display a gayer feeling, both at work and at play. They work in the light self-confident mood of mechanically sure and ready skill. And they turn quickly from work to play. They have more to show for their work—and indeed the average of saving is greater—but they have not the same narrow idea of thrift that was steadily, sternly drilled into the minds of their fathers and grandfathers. It is an age of liberal spending—for Americans today can at the same time spend more and save more. It is an age of expansion, not retrenchment; of producing and using and again producing for use, not of cautious haggling and hoarding. We see in America today not a slow, plodding procession, but a gay and swift parade.

Duties? There is less self-conscious thought and talk about them, but they are reliably taken care of for all that. The old sense of duty had confusing moral implications. Today we have the feeling that there is, quite simply, a job to be done—and then there are many other pleasant things to do. We have an intelligently selfish point of view. We do not regard it as so much a duty to work, only that is the way we can get the things we desire—the more capably we work, the more liberally we can enjoy the bright adventures of our leisure hours—and the more easily, agreeably we can arrange our work, the

better in our opinion. Work is recognized as a means rather than an end.

Some gloomy and some picturesque features have gone from the nation's life. On the credit side, we can say that religion is taken less seriously today. For one thing, it does not agree with the new and realistic tempo of America. And, again, we live in a time of scientific enlightenment, sounder education, and growing freedom of skeptical inquiry. It may be also placed on the credit side that politics are taken less extravagantly. To be sure, the wild and pyrotechnic campaign of other days was interesting as a show. But we are more sensible in our political attitude today, and politics, anyway, furnish a pretty cheap sort of show. We can do better now. Our daily life is more interesting. The parade is more gorgeous, more curious, more swiftly changing—more kaleidoscopic—in character.

It is not a parade that is altogether grand or dignified. We have the egregious folly of a Scopes trial and the antics of moral reformers to engage our attention, along with the news of scientific discoveries, anthropological and archeological expeditions, polar explorations, and the diverting deviltries of "the younger generation"—always a zestful "younger generation" for every old generation that has lost its youth, grown tired, and settled down. We have gang wars, bootlegging scandals, nationally notorious divorces and murders, a plenitude of Drives and Movements and Weeks. We have, when we are getting maybe a trifle bored, books called kindly to our attention by censors here and there, who are trying their best to educate us to realism. We have an endless supply of Rotarian philosophy (every aspect of the world explained in terms of salesmanship) to make us smile when nothing else serves. And we have, also endlessly, the curiosities of

pseudo-Uplift (usually an uplifted club of suppression) and Service with a catch in it.

Yes, in this American parade there is a lot of meaningless noise and specious glitter. But it is a great parade. It is not dull. It does not drag itself along wearily and listlessly, but exhibits gusto even (perhaps especially) in its follies. It is a parade, moreover, in which the element of curiosity is strong. These parading millions are intense in living and in wishing to know about life and, although they are often pathetically misled, their liveliness and curiosity make us hopeful. So, on with the parade!

CHAPTER III

The “Sense of Sin” Is Not So Conspicuous Nor Common Today as It Was a Few Decades Ago

1. MORALS, PLAIN AND FANCY

DISCUSSION of morals, in America or elsewhere, in this day or any day, is apt to take the form of lurid sensationalism or heavily solemn sermonizing. If the snappy and colorful style is desired, it is easy to elaborate upon scandalous examples of loose behavior, selecting, for greater convenience, the affairs of love, liquor and larceny that have attained first-page newspaper notoriety. Dwelling upon these scandals, a writer of capering fancy may go far, ravishing the imagination with visions of a society hell-bent for degeneracy and certainly, extensively damned. The reader may be saved from a dismayed credulity if he examines the life that he personally knows for signs of this extreme degeneracy. Rivaling this sensationalism (and borrowing from it) is the style of moral condemnation and exhortation *a la* Savonarola. Preachers particularly practice this style, although they are not alone, many lay sermonizers busily telling us how bad we are and how good we should be, whether happy or not. (In fact, there is a tendency to separate the ideas of goodness and happiness, which arouses a suspicious, critical mood in the mind of one who takes a broader view of morality.)

As for the psychological effect of the two styles, it may be said that the former makes immorality attractive

and the latter makes morality unattractive. To portray "sins" in lavish colors, and (with censors in mind) to shirk its precise details, is more apt to fascinate the average reader, in a large, vague, shimmering way, than to shock him. The realistic method is sounder, but the shrewdly censor-conscious technique of sensationalism is more popular and, strange to say, more "respectable." On the other hand, when life is treated over-earnestly in terms of moral dangers and duties and doctrines, when the impression is created that every step one takes involves a perturbed moral self-consciousness, when behavior is sickled o'er with the pale cast of a puritanical conscience—then what certain persons choose to call morality has a very annoying, a very forbidding, aspect. It is not sensible tactics on the part of the heavy moralists to insist that people must borrow so much trouble in order to be good. They will be prompted to ask: "Is it worth the trouble?" Or they may look more closely into the nature of morality, and decide that many of these distinctions between good and bad are arbitrary, unreasonable, more imaginary than real. Such inquiries lead to a more practical view of morality.

The morals of America today, in a plain and average survey, appear considerably less hectic than the sensationalists would have us believe. Few go in widely for vice, just as few go in studiously and meticulously for the plaster-saint ideal of virtue. Extremes attract so much attention because they are rare. A description of American morals in terms of sensationalism is bound to be egregiously false. It is also true that the specialists in morality, those who dwell intently and excessively upon the not very clear theme of righteousness, have reason to be disappointed. The "sense of sin" is not so conspicuous nor so common in America today as it was only a few decades

ago. Moral judgments are less dogmatic. The spirit of freedom which is so generally felt in this age, which is expressed in a liberal and questioning attitude toward everything, could not but affect what are called, too narrowly, moral questions.

One is, however, strongly inclined to believe that it is the state of mind rather than actual conduct that has changed. People yielded to the same impulses in the times that are supposed to have been moralistic in tone as compared with the present. There has been nothing added to the old, humanly familiar list of sins. We have not an inventive age in this respect. Nor is it demonstrable that, relative opportunities being considered, there is any more diligent practice of wickedness. (These terms—sin, wickedness, morality—I use always with reservations, of course.) The change is more significantly that of a closer approach of belief to behavior. Formerly men and women "sinned"—that was their mental attitude. They were more apt to behave furtively and to feel guilty. Today men and women enjoy life in a pretty free spirit, and naturally, and (though conscience in the old sense is less thought of) conscientiously. This is true of individual feelings and actions, and it is true of the social viewpoint—there is a broad tendency toward liberalism. Indeed, liberalism is well established. It is not something that is formulated in the laws or (with the average person) in a definite philosophy of life. It is a change that has come insensibly, easily, with the stimulation and expansion of the activities and interests of modern life. Looking at Prohibition and other moral legislation, we may say on the contrary that sumptuary laws are more pronounced in this period of progressive freedom. It should be added, however, that these laws are not obeyed. Back of them is not the spirit of modern America,

but zealous, aggressive, well organized minorities that are inspired by hostility toward this very spirit which is increasingly in evidence. Puritanism once ruled the country, at least so far as belief went, with no very serious challenge to its claims, whereas today Puritanism is more widely denied both in belief and practice. This situation forces the moralists to greater activity. They demand laws in the vain hope of curbing a spirit that is deep-seated and irresistible.

There is another point of view from which to regard the question of changed morals. Or, rather, there are three special attitudes by which morality is judged. Beyond doubt, a great deal of the outcry concerning our alleged degenerate age is inspired by resentment at the growth of skepticism. The decline of religious belief is confused with a falling of moral standards. The pulpit school of morality judges a man by his beliefs—in God, in immortality, in pious churchly sentiments. According to this kind of judgment, an “infidel” is a bad man, regardless of the excellence of character that he may display. It is only a very narrow mind—really, a fanatical mind—that will call our age immoral because of its skepticism, its growing indifference if not antagonism to religion, its abandonment of old-fashioned piety. For obviously that has not to do with men’s behavior. That is not quite true, on second thought. Less religion *does* mean more toleration. It encourages, as it is in the first place the outgrowth of, the spirit of freedom. But it does not indicate nor produce a lowering of moral tone. It is simply a shifting of the angle from which moral questions are considered. The old-fashioned authoritarian dicta of religion have lost force. It is a human, worldly attitude that we have. Our opinions about morality are realistic. We are outgrowing, if we have not already outgrown, the

notion that belief *per se* has a moral value. It is not a question of *good* beliefs, obeying an arbitrary moral standard, but of *true* beliefs based upon reason—of *ideas*, indeed, and a recognition of *facts*, rather than of *beliefs*. The fact that a man is a Christian tells us nothing clearly and essentially about his moral character.

Another theory of morality places the emphasis unduly upon certain habits to the neglect of fundamental character. A strict moralist, for example, considers it immoral for a man to enjoy the pleasures of love without legal formality and sanction; to stimulate himself with liquor; to gamble; to smoke; to use profane language. This moralist distinguishes quite severely between what he calls good and bad habits. He does not clearly perceive or give due credit to the fact that a man may have all of these habits, yet possess a very high moral character; that he may be kind, just, honorable, intelligent, and useful. Nor does he reflect that, on the other hand, a man may refrain from philandering, drinking, swearing, gambling, smoking and all these excessively denounced "sins," yet be full of malice and all uncharitableness.

What a man *is* with respect to his treatment of other men, not a fussy criticism of his strictly personal and privileged habits—this is the best and soundest of the three views of morality that we may use conveniently to define the moral situation in America today. It is admitted that the dogmatic morality of belief, which erroneously takes for itself the name of morality, has diminished in American life. Today there is less emphasis placed on mere belief. Only the preachers and a few of their fanatical followers regard this as important. And even in the pulpit a less positive tone is taken with respect to the matter of belief. There are preachers of the in-

corrigible old-fashioned type; but many preachers have, like other men, submitted to the change in moral attitude.

Concerning the morality of personal habits, one must make a qualified report. It has been pointed out that there are no new habits; there are simply old habits, familiar impulses of human nature, toward which our attitude has changed; habits which are indulged more easily, more innocently in spirit, and more openly in the light of a new social toleration. Smoking, dancing, sports, and in general the worldly pursuit of pleasure are decidedly more common in America today. This is partly due to the fact that we have a more extensive, varied, readily accessible social life. The isolation, both mental and physical, of a more provincial America has been succeeded by a more brilliant, animated, eagerly desirous common life. And, with it all, life is so swift and variegated, we are all so busy living, that we do not judge the personal conduct of our fellows so narrowly; it does not concern us, we always have something better to do than to moralize, and we cannot afford to waste time so foolishly. Moralists, it seems, have plenty of time to spy upon their fellows. Of course, that is their business—a business that does not enjoy the solemn prestige of a pious age that has passed.

Drinking is a habit that has been affected unfavorably by Prohibition. The plain natural tendency of America, before Prohibition, was toward temperance. Our very moral ancestors were harder drinkers than the Americans of the second decade of the twentieth century. In fact, many of the old national heroes were noted for their poker-playing and whiskey-carrying abilities. There is no doubt that, before 1919, the American attitude toward drunkenness (not toward drinking *per se*) was that of increasing disapproval. Then came Prohibition, defying the spirit of freedom, introducing a fanaticism equally

drunken in its extremeness. And while drinking became a popular sign of just rebellion, drunkenness was again looked at more tolerantly. It fits in with the general revolt against authority in morals. Today Americans want to decide moral questions independently, in a free and reasonable spirit, and manage their conduct, not in the false light of theoretical ethics, but in a more realistic, relative and personal light. Above all, there is the strong note of personal liberty. We refuse to believe or do things merely because we are so commanded.

This feeling of personal liberty—although it is a product of the modern spirit—is not a new thing in America, whose beginnings were individualistic and were politically-socially inspired by the modern spirit. What is remarkable in America today is a more liberal conception of moral values. We confront a very peculiar paradox. On the one hand, there is more effort to regulate by law the habits of the individual—a tendency illegitimately born of the idea of social control, an idea that would necessarily appear in an age of such intricate, collective activities; and, on the other hand, there is a breakdown of the old dogmas of puritanism and piety. There are, side by side, the flourishing movement of a new liberalism and the threatening movement of a new tyranny.

Condemning this tyranny, which confuses social with personal affairs, we may at the same time observe approvingly the advancement of social ethics in America. There is a higher standard of political morality. Politics is perhaps hopelessly an ignoble and shifty trade. Yet the open bribery, the utter cynicism, the rank and but feebly challenged corruption of the older America are condemned by the public spirit of today and graft is practiced within more cautious and refined limits. Shamelessly rotten politics belong, like legally protected vice, to the time which

our moral critics fondly call "the good old days." The redlight district was a phenomenon of the piously blue supremacy of puritanism. Indifference to problems of economic justice, a lack of collective idealism, was also characteristic of the period that prided itself upon its strict ideas (if not its strict practice) of virtue.

America today has discarded old-fashioned false modesty, unnatural taboos and inhibitions, and the theatrical idea of Satan camping cunningly with temptations on every man's trail. But it has, after all, an impressively more civilized attitude toward life. It has a far broader and more useful conception of morality. The social basis and purpose of ethics, so long obscured by the dogmatic claims of religion, are now clearly recognized. All that is important in morals is the protection of society, which means, at bottom, a regard for the rights of personality. That is all we can admit as important from the general viewpoint. Beyond that, each should be left free to work out his own destiny and follow that manner of life which is most agreeable to him. This fair, intelligent combination of concern for social welfare and consideration for the rights of personality is, I believe, the most significant moral note in America today, despite the pretensions and fallacies of misdirected reform. It is an America that may shock Puritans, but an America in which the average man has actually a greater scope of freedom and happiness.

We ask, finally, whether in character (which goes deeper than "morals," as this term is commonly used) America has deteriorated. Are men less kind than formerly? They are the same, with, if anything, an improvement from having got rid of an unnaturally harsh theology. The concern for social justice, far more valuable than simple kindness, is greater. But we shall be satisfied with the statement that kindness is at least as readily

found in America today as in any other day. Are men less honest and honorable? There is no evidence that they have weakened in this respect. Indeed, the human and honorable view of morals has been emphasized at the expense of the theological view. And in politics and business there are higher standards of honesty. But, again, let us simply say that men are just as honorable now as ever; that a liberal judgment of moral questions does not weaken the sense of honor. There is more toleration in America today, and that is a fine quality, an elevation of character. We must say that Americans are more intelligent—not necessarily with stronger, abler minds—but with a more enlightened viewpoint. They certainly have not lost in strength of character, for they are as capable of great achievements. They are as useful. They have as firm a grasp upon the business of life. They have fully as responsible (though not as solemn) an attitude toward their work, toward society, toward human interests. In short, the soundness of the American character today shows that the importance of moral rules has been exaggerated, and that a narrow code of behavior is not a necessary safeguard of character. On the contrary, it is an obstacle to a wide, realistic view of life.

2. SEX AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION

We have discussed things that are certainly important in a broad consideration of morals; but not the question that is most pointedly and piquantly meant when the moralists gather in conference and send forth their ringing declarations. Ah, the subject of morality is very simple with them. It does not take them far afield. They are not confused by various aspects of morality. They have one thing in mind—and that is (whisper it softly) sex. So long has moral discourse been concentrated upon this

theme, that when it is said an individual or a society or a period is immoral, the thought instantly leaps to the mind of the average fellow that the trouble is free and easy sexual behavior. It is meant that male and female do not wait for the formal blessing of the church or the permission, in approved though not quite magic form, of the state; that love is playing truant from the disciplined school of virtue; that, in short, to use the old theological formula, men and women are yielding more freely to their sinful human nature.

This problem of sex has always worried mankind and driven it to curious illusions, to extravagances both sad and bold, to strange repressions, excesses, and confusions. It has been a strong and somehow a mysterious passion, and mankind have not been able to take a steadily sensible view of it. At certain periods, they have behaved more naturally and simply and joyously with regard to sex. There have been revolts, both social and individual, against the notion that sex is shameful, that it is terribly dangerous, that it lays snares for the soul of man, and that it is our duty to struggle against our "animal" nature. Sex has been surrounded with a sinister secretiveness. As Montaigne observed, men destroy life in the broad daylight, as a brave and proud spectacle, but they produce life shamefully and in the dark. Yet it is not this privacy, this precious intimacy of the sexual act that has led poor man astray. It is the idea that sex is somehow low and unclean and disgraceful. The intimate approach to sex is natural, but the trouble is that it is accompanied by shame. It has been overshadowed by the sense of sin. And "love" has been represented as something, not ennobling sex, but falsely distinguished from sex. Romance has been employed not as a decoration of sex, but as a deception.

It is certain that America today has a greater freedom in sex behavior. It is not, to be sure, distinctive in the fact that it feels and responds to the urge of passion. When have men and women behaved otherwise? Modern America is, however, more open and convinced in its free ideas about sex. We may doubt if any age has been very successful in suppressing sex. The boasted Victorian age, after all, left men and women as it found them—creatures of desire, not able and not notably willing to violate their own nature. An extremely puritanical age is bound to be a hypocritical age. It introduces confusion, since it cannot change the facts of biology nor create a new, "spiritual" race of men. Studies of life among the New England Puritans reveal that they, too, had scandals and were powerless to stamp out human feelings. During the long reign of Puritanism in America, men were really men, as the saying goes, and women were women. Conduct and belief were more widely separated. That is not, however, the whole difference. Not only is our belief about sex more liberal today, but the actual sex life is freer.

For the explanation we must look chiefly to social conditions—and to certain scientific changes with regard to the consequences of sexual behavior. It is clear that no greater influence can be named than the modern emancipation of women. Practically, the single standard of morals has been discarded—at any rate, it is badly broken and the pieces plentifully scattered. Women have in America today as free an attitude as men. They are able to assert and exercise this freedom as they never were able before. Industrial life has taken women in considerable numbers out of the homes and into the factories. Young girls no longer sit quietly at home with folded hands, waiting for young men who have tired of sowing their

"wild oats" to come and claim them in marriage. They go out "on their own," to work in factories and stores and offices. And consequently they mingle more freely with the opposite sex—they are thrown more upon their own responsibility—they have remarkably expanded conditions of experience and action. The life of the once restricted sex has been immensely broadened by the industrial age. And so they have gained a viewpoint and a definite position of equality toward men. They have ceased to regard themselves as somehow spiritually or morally different from men. They are human beings, simply that, and they fail to understand why they should not be equally, humanly free. They refuse to admit different standards for male and female.

There is the additional fact, striking and wide in its results, that scientific ingenuity has definitely removed the dangers of sex that formerly were a source of fear. It has done this in two ways: by removing at the same time the danger of disease (though carelessness and uncleanliness still claim their victims) and the danger of unwelcome conception. There is no doubt that the knowledge of birth control is a new charter of freedom in sex life. Pleasure no longer carries with it lifelong penalties. Within the bounds of marriage and without these bounds, sex can now be cultivated as a personally emotional side of life, as a pleasurable experience for its own sake, not merely as a procreative act, bringing often unwelcome responsibilities.

It was inevitable that this new freedom of sex should be generally welcomed. Sex offers too great a variety of experience, it is too strong and rich a passion, to be confined to procreative uses. Given the facilities for safely enjoying this rich variety of sex, men and women were sure to take advantage of them and to adjust their moral beliefs conveniently. It is only the few spokesmen of the

utterly discredited, old-fashioned theology—a few ascetics quite out of harmony with the spirit of the times—who insist upon the ancient idea that sex has only the single, narrow justification of bringing children into the world; that sex, taken simply for its emotional value, is sinful. This foolish notion is now commonly rejected or ignored—as I say, in marriage and out. Birth control is regarded indeed as an indispensable condition of married life. The moral dispute is not over birth control, but over the old question whether intimacy outside the respectably prescribed limits of matrimony is right or wrong. It is not a question of the value of marriage—the home and family—as an institution. But is marriage the only sanction of sex intimacy? Is it to be regarded as arbitrarily the only right medium through which sex can be approached?

The reply of America today seems to be largely in the negative. Not only is there an independent attitude toward sex; but marriage itself is judged more liberally; divorce is a familiar and socially approved custom. It is, I am sure, a sign of the superior intelligence of America today that it prefers the dissolution of an unsuccessful, unhappy marriage to the prison-like continuance of a matter of mistaken form. Yet the frequency of divorce and the increased freedom of sex life out of wedlock have not destroyed nor, apparently, made insecure the institution of the home. Home and family have as strong an appeal as sex. Most marriages endure. Those which cannot endure are well dissolved. Children are more protected—they have a better chance in life—the ideal of *human* culture is more intelligently, responsibly emphasized: a fine social development which indicates that we have not been ruined by changing morals.

Let us recognize, finally, that in the critical recon-

sideration of old values the exaggerated virtue of chastity has been challenged. It was, after all, a theological idea. It was also an assertion of sex inequality: for it was—in practice at least—the women who should be chaste, while men lived freely enough. Now that women are emancipated, they reject this illogical, unfair demand. And, generally, both men and women have moved intellectually from the old theological position that chastity *per se* is a virtue. *Why* is it a virtue? they ask. On what realistic (not theoretical or dogmatic) ground can it be defended? What is primarily and essentially evil in the sexual act? They demand a definite reason for its alleged inherent wickedness—and the reason is not forthcoming. Sex is natural, therefore good. The only morality of sex, when it does not (as it need not) involve child-birth, is cleanliness and a consideration of the rights of personality. It is a personal, not a social, matter.

It is also a widely characteristic attitude of America today that sex should not be a mystery but a sanely, scientifically-known part of life. Ignorance (confounded with innocence) was a feature—a disastrous feature—of the old morality. What is basically the most important thing in life was stupidly—worse, from pious principle—neglected. Today we emphasize sex knowledge and hygiene. This shows, not that we are less moral, but that we are certainly more civilized.

But the moralists, though life is too vigorous and eager and expansive for their narrow control, persist in their eloquent cries of alarm. And as they exaggerate and distort the subject of sex in their heavy dissertations and heated fulminations, so they dwell extremely upon the “younger generation.” It is this younger generation which, we are told, is going to the devil sexually and in all ways. Youth naturally falls in readily with the modern spirit. It

responds to the influences of the new world in which it has been raised. The older generation, even though it may accept liberal views, has an unescapable puritanical hang-over; while those who are immovably bound to the sentiments of puritanical training condemn modern youth in bitter or alarmed accents. Of course, the subject of a younger generation has supplied an opportunity for moralists (*i. e.*, mostly the older generation) in other times, and each generation of young people has been condemned as worse than the one before. And, paradoxically, with this alleged degeneracy of the young, the world has been growing better—life has broadly and significantly improved—civilization has steadily advanced.

The younger generation of America today excites more “viewing with alarm” because it exhibits the tendencies of a freer age. It is to a great extent indifferent to religion. It stresses personal independence, and submits less to the control of the elders. It enjoys greater sexual liberty. It is more impatient with dogmas and dictatorial precepts, choosing to test all things for itself. It is, admittedly, often wild and foolish. Yet this younger generation has its code. It has not thrown overboard all morality—or character—but has rather taken for itself new standards. And in the main these standards are realistic, being guided by the sound idea that this world is a place for happiness—that, certainly, “threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise” should not influence one’s behavior—that, in fact, the elder moralists have too long imposed a fraudulent scheme of morality upon the world.

Actually, the younger generation does not seem to be greatly punished or injured for its “sins.” It is a bright, active, healthy generation. Young people know better how to care for themselves, how to keep fit, how to enjoy life healthfully and naturally. And, yes, science has even

taught them how to "cheat nature." This younger generation is better educated, attracted by a wider range of interests, and certainly not less ambitious and industrious than former generations of young people. It is fortunately spared the struggle with primitive difficulties, with the hard elemental conditions, which is pointed out as evidence of the singular fortitude of our ancestors. But we observe that young people meet very well the new conditions—the demands and opportunities—of today. New times, new ways—new tasks—and new adventures.

3. THE BRIGHT SIDE

Critics are told, with wearisome insistence, that they should look on the bright side. The angle of vision changes, however, and while the critic is pointing out the bright side, the critic of the critic—who labels himself an optimist—has turned to bemoan what he considers the dark side. It happens that the very moralists and pseudo-optimists who so intensely dislike modern social and intellectual criticism are foremost in denouncing the sins of the age and predicting terrible things if men and women continue to think and behave liberally. They are misled by theory. They have set, narrow ideas of good and bad. And anything contrary to their dogmas must be bad, whatever the actual results. They try to fit life to a theory, instead of judging by realistic observation of the facts.

Now, we shall entertain ourselves quite laudably by looking on the bright side. We have admitted that, according to the standards of morality that prevailed in the past century, America today has fallen into evil ways. America is certainly not moral today in the puritanical sense. Habits, fashions, opinions, associations that are today accepted tolerantly and practiced easily would have been branded by our forefathers as shockingly evil, loose,

and ungodly (and we are willing, in the mood of polite concession, to admit that they are ungodly). But I repeat that we have not abandoned morality. We have simply moved forward to a different ground and viewpoint of morality. Putting aside all arguments about morality, let us inquire what are the conditions of life in America to-day, by which we are soundly to judge whether things are going from bad to worse or from good to better. Do we see signs of fatal decay and weakness and rottenness in the American social fabric? Are we degenerating? To be sure, there are many defects in the society of America to-day, but are we worse than former generations, and if so, in what respect are we worse? This would be the situation if we were so very bad.

On the contrary, we see that American society is virile, efficient, and progressive. There is a general advancement. Our new freedom, it can fairly be said, has been good for us. Certainly, it has not marked us plainly and warningly as the hell-bent generation of pulpit fancy. Physically and mentally, we have a better age. We are healthier. Science has steadily pushed forward in its conquest of disease. Public health services are far more widespread and efficient than formerly. There has been within a generation a large new field of education opened by the teaching of hygiene in the schools. The ideal of physical culture is common today. And we observe its results in the bright, lively, well-developed appearance of that younger generation which gives so much anxiety to the moralists. The average expectancy of life is longer; so that if we are really going to hell, we shall have a longer and more interesting journey. Educationally, not the most pessimistic bewailer of the evils of the age will deny that we are far ahead of American standards a few decades ago. We have a wider scope of education. We

have a better organized school system. Instruction in the old subjects is more thorough and intelligent, while science has given us a vast new body of knowledge. And the advantages of this modern education are more commonly enjoyed. It is, then, a very well educated generation that is treading the paths of moral freedom. It is very soundly and hopefully equipped to deal with life on its own terms.

This is also a very busy age. The behavioristic adventures of America today have not brought negligence of the important business of life. The country's work does not suffer, but is on the contrary very energetically performed, with an efficiency that continues to show quite satisfactory results. If America can both work and play effectively, if it can conveniently reconcile many interests in life, who shall find fault with its fairly won freedom? Does American life exhibit a morality at odds with oldtime piety and Puritanism? Very well; we ask what are the consequences of this changed morality. They seem to be good; therefore, we are not able to understand how this new morality can be so bad. It works very agreeably, and what more can be desired?

Moral anarchy means, of course, in the moralists' vocabulary, a defiance of their narrow standards. What they call anarchy is just a displacement of old values by new values. The fact is that our social life is very well organized. Our freedom does not mean disorganization nor a blind, topsy-turvy life. We distinguish sensibly between personal and social interests. Living in a very complicated age, having more intricate social problems than demanded the attention of any past age, we manage on the whole workably if not perfectly. And we are going ahead. We are doing better, not worse. The necessities of social life have not been neglected; but, with all our liberty of thought and behavior, with our more generously expan-

sive code, we have an increasing planfulness and scientific attitude toward our social life.

We have, finally, a happier age. And, certainly, this happiness is in great measure due to our humanized ethics, our liberation of spirits, our repudiation of all that Puritanism implies. Moralists, very likely, would not be reassured by the fact that this is a happier age. As we have seen, they have a perverse tendency to separate the ideas of goodness and happiness. They would have us keep strictly to the old way of dogmatic righteousness—the straight and narrow path—even though we should be less happy. To be happy in violating the moral rules they lay down is, indeed, to aggravate the offense. At the very least they would have us burdened with a sense of sin. Yet it seems reasonable to us that if this age is healthy, busy, intelligent, progressive and happy, the moral situation cannot be alarming.

CHAPTER IV

“Better Fifty Years of Jazz Than a Cycle of Puritanism,” Says This Free and Joy-Seeking Age

1. THE WORLD WAR

“WHEN in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Human beings behave, not deliberately with reference to fixed and abstract principles, but in natural reaction to their surroundings. Precept follows practice. Practice follows conditions. We rationalize our behavior, but our ways and our ideas are alterable by efficient causes, and changes come as if in the night to appear surprisingly in their full character with the new dawn. We have seen that the social-industrial development of America has brought about a changed moral viewpoint, changed habits, and changed associations. Breaking away from old factors of isolation, speeding up activities, accelerating the tempo of social intercourse, and leading an immemorially withdrawn class—the women—out into the busy world, our industrial America has necessarily evolved a new pattern—or patterns—of life. Ideas reflect the social scene. An agricultural society cannot be expected to present the same moral features as an industrial society; within the broadly familiar limits of human nature, there is yet room for a great deal of difference. Similarly, a poor and undeveloped country will offer marked moral contrasts to a rich, developed country. A country in which there is a vital, close intermingling of the people, with easy

travel and quick communication, will differ culturally from a country in which cities, towns, and districts have less intimate and important relations.

Broadly speaking, the contemporary life of America, insofar as it is distinctive and has problems quite its own, is explained by modern industry and its many ramifications of influence. It will be interesting, however, to place specially on view certain factors—certain events—certain materials that have contributed to the new America of this day and hour. Thus, looking at particular phases, we shall more clearly perceive the operation of cause and effect. Through the particular features we can better appreciate the general sweep of change.

More frequently than any other cause, the World War is emphasized as having produced our "younger generation," our broader morals, our more sophisticated and rebellious and jazz-stepping America. This statement is often made too sweepingly and it has come to be quite a handy formula, useful in shirking a more extended analysis. Yet there is plainly a great deal of truth in the statement that the war loosed new forces in our life and overthrew old barriers. Those who went abroad to fight—and those who stayed at home—were imbued with a different psychology by this overwhelming, irresistible event, this tremendous shaking-up of the old America. Of those who kept the home fires burning and those who faced the foreign firing lines, it can be said that they were thrust suddenly forward into a position of new world-awareness and greatly widened interests. It was really America's grand, gaudy and grim *début* in world society (the Spanish-American War was but a tentative step) although America's participation in international affairs had been gradually extending throughout the first two decades of the century. Anyway, for the

American people it made Europe and the world seem more real, more close, more related, and was the strongest, suddenest blow ever delivered at the traditional provincialism of the country. It was a shock which drove America temporarily crazy but which also had the effect of an awakening.

The war took the American boys (in fact, American males of all ages between youth and middle life) away from the settled life of their homes and jobs, and introduced them to the atmosphere of army camps, where military discipline was accompanied by a considerable moral freedom and a roughness of exclusively masculine society, varied by joy-seeking trips to the nearest city of bright lights, women and jazz: an environment not calculated to induce a mood of fasting and prayer. In fact, the very good boy of model upbringing and habits couldn't survive in this environment, save miserably and as an object of ostracism or derision. He had to adjust himself—at any rate, that was the plain line of least resistance—to the rough, profane, swaggering habits of his comrades. He had to become "one of the boys," and usually he did so. Thus patriotism put virtue under trials greater than it could easily, fairly bear. It would be hard to imagine more foolish bunk than that which is talked about the moral value of military training. What was incontestably the fact, as any veteran of the crusade for democracy will agree, was that the army was a remarkably efficient school of profanity, smoking, philandering, etc., unmentionably.

To be sure, these were not exactly new things under the sun; but they were exaggerated and intensified in the army camps. And many who had been kept to a pretty strict kind of life at home found a surprising capacity for indulgence in the manly sins, as it were, of these

patriotic communes. The very restrictions of military discipline under which they had to live forced the boys in the army to blow off steam quite vigorously in every possible way. The extreme profanity, for instance, of an army camp was due not simply to the fact that the society was selectly and securely masculine, but also to the desire for emotional relief from the discipline. Living for the most part without the companionship, innocent or otherwise, of women, when they had passes to the city the boys in uniform were not a bit puritanical in their thoughts, and there were leading spirits, accustomed to the ways of the world, to provide expert tutelage for unsophisticated lads who had been meticulously domesticated. The monotony of army life (particularly in the home camps) was varied by considerable gambling. Many fellows learned to be quite skillful with the cards and dice, who had entered the patriotic ranks without experience. And some very high-class gamblers, who made the game a profession, were graduated from the barracks. There was a phenomenal increase in smoking, and the handiest, most popular smoke was the cigarette.

Certainly, the war was a tremendous boon to the cigarette industry. One of the favorite patriotic inspirations was that of sending cigarettes to the brave boys, to make their lot more bearable and cheerful, even if immorally so. Some protest was made by moral organizations, but it had little effect. The moral question was ignored in the general impulse to let the patriots—who might be going to their death—have what they wanted. Patriotism at once assumed a greater importance than morality, the result being that the moral bars were let down and the soldiers, if they had to submit to military

discipline, repaid themselves by seizing avidly upon their new opportunities for freedom.

Abroad, the situation was more intense. There the soldiers indeed had the psychology of men facing death, and consequently their main idea was to enjoy life while they could. Fellows who had always followed exemplary habits in the States joined with the rest and drank copiously of the wines of France, became almost over-night heavy cigarette smokers (in the early part of the century, when the cigarette was a symbol of degeneracy and downright vice, they would have been called "cigarette fiends") and were not backward about seeking the favors of French girls. It was a mighty forcing school of free and adventurous behavior. When one thinks of the stream of young fellows, from the farms and small towns especially, who had their first decided taste of vivid worldly life and lax codes of behavior, one can readily appreciate the great moral change that came over a large and energetic body of Americans who, naturally, brought back to peace-time America a new viewpoint and newly acquired habits.

For obviously the effects of war are not, like the actual military service, for the duration of the war. They last and they spread. When the soldiers returned from France, they did not settle down and begin to live quietly and carefully—not even those who had lived in that manner before the war. They were used to freedom of conduct, they liked it, and they set a pace for others.

That pace, however, had been learned at home also. In the perfervid, patriotically concentrated atmosphere of the war, in America as well as abroad, the question of being "one hundred per cent American" was predominant, and if one were only ten percent moral that didn't matter so greatly. Those were exciting times, keyed to

an unnatural high tension, and an increased laxity of behavior, stimulated by the excitement, was also overlooked (not censoriously spotted) in the excitement. Whoever was loyal and was helping to win the war could do about as he or she pleased. The gentler sex, so-called, not only showed its fierceness and belligerence but also—and in the sacred name of patriotism—sacrificed its virtue in many cases. How refuse the last delights of love to the brave fellows who were going out to die for their country? And the girls, seeing the boys dramatically as heroes, were all the more ready to meet their advances complaisantly. It was a patriotic adventure for everyone. And war babies were pledges of patriotism.

It is also important to consider that the girls and women were drawn in a suddenly accelerated movement into stores and factories and offices, to fill the places of the heroes in camp and trench. For many girls no less than for many boys who had lived a retiring and fairly simple existence, the war meant stepping into a wider and faster life. Those who had been unnaturally restricted at home were, often, thrust without preparation into the extremely contrasting conditions of work and experience and association outside the home. There was a general shifting and upsetting. And it was ridiculous to think that, with such conditions, America could remain the same. A decade, at least, of ordinary change came in two years of extraordinary ferment.

In the unsettled period of reaction and readjustment following the war, the tendency of change still made persistent headway. The soldiers returning from France and the home camps, mingling with the civilian population, carried with them the influence of their intense school of change. And they discovered, too, that similar influences had been working throughout the country.

This impetuous and scarcely resisted wave of change affected, of course, most conspicuously the young. But it did not stop there. The country had been shaken emotionally and morally—old inhibitions had been kicked over—and a new restlessness pervaded American society. Moralists might deplore the change—sociologists and liberal critics, looking at conditions from a different point of view, might discern uneasily certain dangerous tendencies bred by the war spirit—but the tide was (certainly in its bearing upon the manners and morals of America) irresistible.

Apparently, at first glance, the moralists won a victory when they rushed Prohibition into law, without a popular vote and while the soldiers were abroad. But it was soon learned that the country would not obey the law. It was decidedly a most unfavorable time for effective moral legislation. And the young, newly stimulated to freedom by the breaking down of old walls of custom and the confusion of once clearly drawn lines, cultivated the habit of drinking more assiduously than any previous young generation. Once having thrown their moral cloaks over the fence, the young continued to experiment freely with sex. The cigarette became the great national smoke, of young and old, male and female. The strains of jazz were heard more excitably throughout the land. Changing America moved forward more quickly under the mighty impetus of war and its aftermath. And neither the flatulent piety of William Jennings Bryan nor the spurious idealism of Woodrow Wilson (both inviting to vivid and profane cynicism) was mourned as a moral loss.

2. THE AUTOMOBILE

The World War was more conspicuous—or more fundamental—in its revolutionizing impetus because, for

one thing, the whole social life and psychology was dominated by it. It was an upheaval that involved not only the soldiers but the population generally. And more importantly, the World War accelerated and accentuated a changed life because it happened in an age of new social-industrial conditions. The transformation would have come anyway, but it would have taken longer.

We are going to look more definitely at certain factors that aided in this transformation. As we say, habits respond to conditions and not theories. Consider, for example, the automobile. First, let us set aside as exaggeration the wild statements about the automobile that come from some preachers, who regard it as a device of Satan, leading to ruin, a very "devil wagon" indeed as the people called it a quarter of a century ago. The results of the convenient, common use of the automobile have not been perceptibly so terrible, and, besides, it is only one thing that has helped to facilitate new habits and associations which, in any case, were certain to be the outgrowth of an industrial age. But undoubtedly the automobile has been, morally, a means of escape. It has really been more a safety valve than an explosive, dangerous force. Here is a powerful and ready means of getting away from unwelcome censoriousness and restrictions, for cheating, as it were, those who so delight in spying upon their fellows.

It used to be said that every man's home is his castle. (That is less true, now that we have the unwarranted raids of Prohibition agents and the Constitution is being stretched or torn or simply ignored to serve a new tyranny.) But the auto is a more efficient means of protection, enabling people to move about quickly and freely, and making possible a greater variety of freedom than the home. And the automobile is useful to those

who have no homes in which they can be quite free—namely, the young. The young can more easily avoid the surveillance of parents and society. Dangerous to morals? That depends upon how severely we look at moral questions—or upon how we define morality. Undeniably, it arms youth more effectively in the game (really an old game) of evading a strict, ever-watchful control over their lives. Old people have always interfered too much with the young, and not very wisely. The contest has been unequally in favor of the old. If now it is unequally in favor of the young, we may say that turn about is fair play.

True, the automobile is a great facility for young lovers. But why heat our imagination with the notion that love is so awfully wrong and is more prolific in evil than good? There was plenty of secret love-making before the automobile. Human nature didn't become suddenly amorous with the use of the motor car. But the motor car has enabled it to assert itself more freely.

The fact, at any rate, is past denying and society must make the best or the worst of it. Having the automobile, the individual can, on the whole, defy any censorious group. He can come and go as he pleases. He can park for a minute to take a drink in front of a church or for an hour to make love in a secluded rural place.

Again, people are not confined any longer to the countryside or the small towns. They do not have to stay where life is quiet and dull (although that dullness is everywhere being changed); but in a few hours they can be in the nearest large city, and the neighbors never know, though they may be itchingly curious to know, what they do. City interests and a sophisticated behavior spread readily to the countryside. Those who live unfortunately in a community dominated by puritanical laws,

where Sundays, for example, are dead days, can speed themselves away to a community which allows greater freedom. They can wave a flippant, mocking goodbye to the local bigots and, in their cars, enjoy the consciousness of being a law unto themselves—or choose a friendlier jurisdiction some miles farther on.

There is a distinct sense of freedom felt by the occupant of an automobile. It releases one's natural self, removes annoying inhibitions, creates a feeling of security and withdrawnness. One is not held to one spot or one manner of life, one is not immediately under the eye of espionage or authority, one is not oppressed nor uneasy in mind. The psychology of power and freedom that is created by the automobile is very great indeed. One or two or a group of kindred spirits can speed through the most hopelessly bigot-ridden territory, through a district where freedom is denied or ominously under suspicion, yet be shut in safely from all such menaces.

This is mainly—though, since we can't have everything, not entirely—true. To be sure, the automobile does not escape altogether the threats and restrictions from which it does, on the whole, afford an admirable means of relief. On the roads at the edge of a city (and even on country roads) motorcycle cops often surprise lovers and a bottle-carrying group, sometimes commanding them to move on, sometimes making arrests, but more often—at any rate, too often—extracting hush money. Indeed, they sometimes arrest man and wife for the "crime" of "petting" on the highway. For even properly married couples often find the car and the open air better for affectionate exchanges than the parlor or the porch at home. And in these days of Prohibition cars are frequently stopped to be searched for liquor. Even so, the automobile offers a pretty safe convenience, largely suc-

cessful, for evading dry snoopers—although it may be said plausibly enough that the drinkers are safer in the bars and cabarets of the city.

There are some persons who think that the best use of the automobile is that it provides a mental relief, an escape from the unpleasant atmosphere of communities where narrow standards and views of life prevail. It would be too bad if such persons, even though they can actually manage to live in their own way, were compelled to stay in such an atmosphere, without the frequent vacations which the automobile affords every evening. As it is, they can be free even of a sensitiveness to the stuffiness of such surroundings. They can, to use an old expression which specially fits the use of the automobile, be as free as air.

So, while there is no evidence that the automobile has disastrously struck down the character of the people—that it has led or is likely to lead to ruin—that it is so terrible an agency as some moralists would have us believe, it has certainly brought an increase of liberty. And in this respect, I think, it has been admirable rather than deplorable, a brightening of life rather than a sinister influence. If freedom is a good thing, then we must look favorably upon the automobile, which has been a powerful agency of freedom.

It has also been an agency of civilization. People have mingled more familiarly, they have widened their sphere of movement, in the past decade or two. They do not live virtually retired in one community, but are civilized by travel and enlivened by a variety of scenes, broadened in their viewpoint by contact with more liberal environments. Man is not bound so narrowly to any environment, when he has the automobile for escape. Trips to the city are now commonplace—whereas, a quarter of a

century ago they were rare and were more of a shock than an enlightening influence upon rural and village psychology. Now a play or a symphony concert or a lecture can be attended by people from the small towns and the farms. Good roads and fast cars will take them to the theater doors quite as conveniently as if they were but spending the evening at a neighbor's.

We might add, for what it is worth, that the automobile has accustomed us to late hours. The old nine o'clock town is a thing of the past, at least so far as most motorists are concerned. Just think of the night hours that were wasted before the coming of the automobile! Here, in terms of actual pleasure and experience, we see that the motor car has added greatly to the span of life. It has made the darkness friendly and alive. Compared with the past, this is a moving rather than a stationary age. And a moving age is a freer age. Really, we should all be grateful to the automobile (to the past inventors and present makers of automobiles) for this new equipment of freedom. Only the bigots and snoopers—only those who believe that freedom is the ruination of man—can feel resentment.

3. THE MOVIES

"Ah," you will say, "now we are going to consider a *purely* guiding and restraining moral influence." We are not, however, interested in movie propaganda. We are not deceived by Will Hays and the patter of purity. No—we shall rather include the movies among the factors that have stimulated a freer and easier moral attitude. Intellectually and artistically, the movies are poor indeed. They have been, not a soundly realistic nor thoughtful, but a piquant and exciting revelation of the

many-sided world to millions who find in them their chief entertainment.

The movies are, in fact, a powerful foe of Puritanism. Not intentionally so, perhaps, but that is the sum of their influence. They are full of seductive pictures of the bright, joy-paced life of the big cities. And so they carry to the people in smaller communities visions of vivid experience that otherwise would not be known to them. Here are flashing spectacles of luxury, gay adventures, the world of jazz spread tantalizingly before the millions of America. The psychology of dull satisfaction in a narrow, drab scene is certainly affected by the movies which provide such striking contrasts. If people did not know that a far brighter life was beyond the horizon, they might well be resigned to the sober and strict commonplaces of a quiet, unambitious village, or a "wide place in the road." Certainly the lure of the world—or, as the preachers say, "the world, the flesh and the devil"—was less familiar and less potent a few generations ago when the movies were not a factor in (let us again borrow something from the clergy) the "spiritual" awakening of provincial America. Visions of the world were more vague, more distant. The simple life was the greatest reality. But now visions of the fast-stepping, gaily dressed and decorated, desirous world are vividly, concretely placed before the eyes of dwellers in the most remote places. The dance of life is nightly performed for the delight and the yearning of millions. Dissatisfaction with a narrow, dull environment is more likely to be created by the gorgeous scenes that are unrolled by the films. If dancing, joy-riding and a life of pagan revelry, so to speak, are upsetting to engage in, then they must have a morally changing effect when people watch them.

The spectator of a dance cannot help feeling the rhythm that moves the dancers.

Beyond doubt, a worldly-minded attitude is produced by the movies. The movies, after all, do not deal in metaphysics nor (in spite of the Hays propaganda) in ideals. They certainly do not put forth the gospel of renunciation, self-denial and the straight and narrow path. No, they present the objects and scenes of this world—they are, in truth, materialistic. In plot and characterization they are trivial indeed, and they are incorrigibly romantic—but they do concentrate the mind upon things, actions, scenes that are tangible. It seems plausible that a movie-goer is most likely to be inspired by desire for the features of worldly life that he sees on the screen. He is, at any rate, attracted by, rather than critical toward, them. Even if we say that his desire is satisfied vicariously—that seeing others enjoy these things takes the place of his own enjoyment of them—it is still true that he has as a result a more worldly cast of mind. He will certainly look upon these as good things. He will enjoy them as far as his circumstances permit. He will not feel—he cannot feel—ascetic about them—familiarity, in short, will breed an attitude of approval and even admiration toward the luxuries and the lively pleasures of this world, an attitude which is plainly at odds with the puritanical viewpoint.

Imagine what the old-fashioned New England conscience (which perhaps was more of a mask than we know) would have thought of the movies—that conscience would have denounced the films as the most flagrant invention and temptation of the devil—a most sinfully glittering enemy to the life of austere virtue. If the theater was looked upon as bad by the religious mind, the movies are worse, for they can present “the world,

the flesh and the devil" more gorgeously and prodigiously. The surviving New England conscience indeed condemns the movies on this ground today—although moralists, as a rule, seem to be fooled by the Hays purity propaganda, and as the movies pile on the suggestiveness thick and piquant about sex rather than treat sex matters with mature, intelligent realism, these moralists feel that virtue is befriended on the screen.

Yet in their handling of sex there is no doubt that the movies encourage a greater freedom of morals. Is it bad, as the moralists say, to have the mind dwelling much upon sex? Then the movies are the most sinful agency in this respect. Sex is the great, favorite, unescapable movie theme. It is vivid, suggestive, predominant in nearly every picture. Nor is it sex that is chastely, demurely romantic—pure love as divorced from the thought of sex—which is seen in the films. The adventurous side of sex is suggested plainly in nine movies out of ten. Illicit love frequently furnishes the leading motive. Ladies of easy virtue are made very familiar. Pajama and bedroom scenes stop just short of the final view. There is no doubt as to the meaning. Poses and captions that leave, after all, little to the imagination are common. Compared with the movies, the new fictional realism against which the censors rage is insignificant in its aphrodisiac effects.

Love—jazz—bright lights—luxury and adventure: these glitter on the screen, carrying their high-potency message in a thousand forms—and is this constant influence to leave the minds of the millions of movie-goers unchanged? Clearly, here is an influence that must be recognized as foremost in exciting a wider range of curiosity and desire in our age. We have said elsewhere that the rich, active, desire-creating civilization of our time

has made impossible the old limitations of thought and behavior—that it leads naturally and inevitably to a more expansive moral attitude, with more emphasis upon the possibilities of pleasure and a falling away from the idea of puritanical self-denial. The significance of the movies, as they relate to the present theme, is that they are the most popular agency for keeping constantly and fully before the minds of the people the material richness and pleasure-tendencies of our civilization. They reflect, in artistically but vividly and alluringly, the gay and desirous and worldly-minded life of America today. They are not educational. Their cultural value is almost zero. They do not encourage a thoughtful or broad *understanding* of life. But they certainly widen the bounds of conceivable experience and keep familiarly present a flashing and lively atmosphere in which Puritanism is not at home. It is not simply that the movie-goers want to translate directly into behavior what they see done—or suggested—on the screen. Their own behavior is not affected perhaps, in such a direct and obvious fashion. But their viewpoint is changed, they think readily and complaisantly of things which, to the Puritan imagination of an earlier day, were of a vague, sinister nature. And, of course, with this psychology they are less inclined to consider censoriously the conduct of others and are more freely spirited in their own pleasures. The movies, dazzlingly concrete, carry the message of worldliness more widely and effectively than the preachers, hazily abstract, can carry the message of unworldliness or other-worldliness.

4. THE JAZZ AGE

This is called the Jazz Age. By this is meant the increased speed and what some consider the frivolity of

living. It implies looser morals—"looser" meaning anything from reckless abandon to what many regard, more approvingly, as a more liberal, rightfully emancipated idea of conduct. It is pointed out as most scandalously exemplified in the younger generation. In broad outline, what is said about the Jazz Age is true enough. Life is far swifter. There has certainly been a sundering of the old tight bonds that—theoretically at least—held men to a hard-and-fast moral belief. People are more given to an amiable latitude in their interpretation of right and wrong. This younger generation does "step out" more than boys and girls did a generation ago—largely because they have the opportunity and indeed the circumstances of life make it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to tread such a narrow path. We differ in our judgment of these tendencies. Extreme fanatics think that they presage the complete breakdown of society. Some others mildly disapprove and see cause for disquietude if not for extreme alarm. Still others find the new tendencies more good than bad, certainly the natural outcome of a new environment, which must be wisely accepted and dealt with rather than railed against in futile fanaticism. And these latter believe that freedom, while it involves mistakes, is the most favorable condition of human happiness and development. They prefer jazz to the doxology.

Again, jazz more specially means the snappy, amorous, high-powered style of music that is popular in America (and throughout the world) today. This music is a symptom of the Jazz Age. But has it been an influence in changing the mood of the time? We are familiar with the old saying that it is more important to write a nation's songs than to write its laws: in which there is more than a hint of truth, although both songs and laws are but reflections of the forces, deeper than either, that

make for change. Anyway, there is ground for holding that the wide spreading of jazz music has encouraged the modern liberation of moral viewpoint. This dissemination of the jazzy tunes and the jazzy sentiments—this influence of a lighter, gayer, even reckless mood—has undoubtedly been made possible by the invention of “canned music.” The phonograph, proceeding rapidly to the elaboration of the modern music machine, is one of those special instruments that has helped to upset the stiff morality and conventionality of an older America.

There was, to be sure, lively popular music before the period of mechanical song and dance. Chaste sentimental ballads and sober hymns were not the only melodies known to the people. But there was nothing like the enormous, endless stream of highly spiced and colorful jazz that is known today. The phonograph set everybody instantly to singing these airs so appealing to “flaming youth”—these “red-hot mama” and “she’s my baby” songs, these melodies of vivid, alluring sensuousness, these captivating invitations to the dance of desirous life; songs that—many of them—are crude and inept in words and often weird in tune; yet songs, too, that are tearfully or sweetly sentimental as often as they are flippant. They have, at any rate, affected the mood of the country. One cannot immediately name any moral teacher who has had such an influence upon the psychology of present-day America as Irving Berlin.

The extent of this influence, however, is plainly due to the cheap, easy, mechanical popularization of jazz. (There has, on the other hand, been a growing acquaintance with classical music, so that the mechanization of music has had excellent cultural results which cannot be disputed.) The music machine was a common household feature when the radio came to carry the strains of jazz

far more widely on the air. And so these lively melodies are unescapable and are constantly urging their emotional appeals day and night throughout the land. If the average American doesn't know the words of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, he knows quickly the words of the latest hit from Broadway. And these songs, one and all, however they vary in merits, whatever may be said of them artistically, express the sentiments—in their rhythm they express the very spirit—of a free and joy-seeking age.

Is it surprising that America keeps step—to its jazz tunes? Would it be conceivable that a strong puritanical note should prevail in this atmosphere of eager and colorful celebration of the senses? One must indeed become a hermit and flee to some wilderness if one would escape the sounds and the general influence of jazz. It follows us along the street; insinuatingly pursues us at our meals; greets us in every home; is tantalizingly, endlessly familiar in every theater and movie house.

And what is the meaning of this jazz? It means that love is more frankly and gaily recognized. It means that the consciousness of sex appeal is not hidden and talked about with furtive shamefulness, but that it is popularly in the air. It means that the dancing spirit of joy and laughter is irresistibly the favored expression of the time. It means that life is felt and seen more in the sensuous (but not necessarily "immoral") terms of rhythm and color. It means an incessant, an emotionally strong defiance of all austere, narrowing attitudes toward life.

This spirit of the Jazz Age means, in a word, youth—and youth, not simply in years, but in the tonic vitality and eagerness that pervades all ages. For let us appreciate one effect of the new spirit of America—namely, the less acutely marked features and sentiments of age.

If you are in middle life—which now means that you are young—you will remember when that period was looked upon as far past youth and indeed on the threshold of old age. Men had unimaginatively settled down, women were staid and matronly if not old, in middle life. Youth was a brief time. Duties, responsibilities, and a certain grown-up demeanor were borne all too soon and all too consciously. Now, the spirit of youth is more widely evident and more lasting. There is a zestful quality, a tendency to keep in step and not to lag in the procession, which is displayed by the older men and women as well as by the younger generation.

There is some comedy indulged in at the expense of those who, in middle life or beyond it, sustain the appearance and the interests of youth. Yet surely it is an admirable tendency. We shall grow old soon enough: why needlessly hasten the process? The youthfulness of the Jazz Age is its brightest feature. For that youthfulness means joy, freedom, and hope. Even though it has led us into some extremes and errors, it is well that we have been shaken out of narrow ways and views. The fact that liberty may lead its beneficiaries into error at times has never yet removed the desire of men for liberty—it is agreed that liberty is a precious if not a perfect thing. Youth's blunders do not make men envy youthfulness any the less—and, as in our time, gladly prolong the spirit of youthfulness. Yes, it is well that life is more youthful, that it is swifter, more colorful, and more brightly tuneful. The facile ubiquity of the automobile, the glittering worldliness of the movies, and the irresistible strains of jazz—these are good, and prompt us to the paraphrase, "Better fifty years of jazz than a cycle of Puritanism."

CHAPTER V

Shattering the Old, Traditional and Sacred Has Brought a Liberalization of Our Attitude Toward Life

1. FAMILY LIFE

THREE is a class of men who cry out against all change, without trying to understand it—devoting little or no thought to whether it be inevitable and therefore but uselessly resisted, whether it have within itself the seeds of good and a fair development along new lines, or how men can adjust themselves safely: others look at changing phenomena and tendencies primarily with a view to understanding—seeking for causes and for the best way of dealing with the new circumstances.

Those observers who merely deplore without understanding, who are alarmed at a glance and to whom new things always wear a frightful face, stress quite vehemently the modern situation of the home and family—what they call the decay of the good old American family life. Although not very critical in observation nor patient in analysis, nevertheless they can see (not being blind) that the nature of family life in our country has undergone some transformation. And the mere recognition of change is enough to set them off in full cry, melodramatically, without further thought. Almost they seem to go to the simple, undiscriminating, unthinking length of holding that all change is, by some malicious or sportive decree of Providence (or, rather, Improvidence), for the worse. If family life in America is differ-

ent today from what is was fifty years ago, they argue that family life must have fallen upon evil times. They interpret, sweepingly and not at all precisely, a change in family life as meaning absolutely a decay in family life and its threatened extinction. The passing of old things is regarded by them not in the light of progress but as a lurid, terrible cataclysm.

It is better to look in a rational spirit at this subject of the home. Certainly, there is not the old intense—one might say ingrown—domestic atmosphere today. The interests of a family are less turned in upon itself and more turned outward toward the broader streams of social life. In a word, the family is not as tight and self-centered a unit. Generally speaking, this is the tendency, more or less notable according to economic circumstances and the effective traditions and ideas of any period, of a development from the primitive (or provincial) to the highly civilized environment. The family is more pronounced and more important a group—it stands out more definitely in significance and authority—in primitive than in complicated social life. Historically this is true and we can see at once how natural it should be. The simpler the state of society, the more does the business of life naturally center in the family. It is the overshadowing influence; the dominant group; the most fixed point in life—and there are, of course, fewer interests that transcend the limitations of domestic psychology and economy. As society grows and expands its interests, however, men's thoughts are directed more variously and taken out into wider circles; they have added, extra-family obligations, an increasingly elaborate pattern both of emotional and practical things calling for their attention, new directions in which to bend their energies. And naturally, as the conditions of life

grow more complex, the simple interests of the family have not the same intensely holding power.

This is a general social truth. It happens to be most notably illustrated—carried to farther conclusions—by the industrial society of our time. After all, in an agricultural manner of life the unit of the family is obviously more fixed. This is further true when we observe a society that is rather static (though no society could be entirely so) than dynamic, that is arbitrarily separated into social classes or castes. The same family will stick for generations to a piece of land, and sons will follow very simply in the footsteps of their fathers, working at the same im-memorial tasks. Only the exceptional, bolder sons will go out into the world and depart from the home traditions. A few centuries ago by far the majority of people were born, lived and died without adventuring forth into the world beyond their narrow native sphere. This was true of the agricultural population (which meant then the immense majority); and also in the cities, home and shop were closely related, artisans too had well-defined traditions of trade and family to follow, and the family was the most important, comprehensible unit of association. The social life, particularly for the masses, was not expansive nor did the world, near or far, present a many-sided, stimulating appeal to draw men from safe, familiar (and dull) paths.

In the development of America, before the machine age came fully into being, life was more on the move owing to the unsettled character of the land and the urge of pioneering; yet with the countless families that moved westward in an unceasing stream, the home was naturally the center of co-operation, social intercourse, and defense—necessarily more so than in the already settled regions. Family life—by which we mean especially the strong hold

of the family upon youth, its peculiar domination both mental and physical upon the group—was of very decided importance in American society. The authority and the overshadowing importance of parents, meaning particularly the male head of the family, was indeed too narrowing. It was discouraging to individuality. Such a close and confining influence did not encourage the broader growth—the free bent—of character. It was, however, the natural thing in a semi-primitive society, and, while narrowly limited, it served as discipline and co-operation. The call of the world was not so strong, its opportunities and appeals were not so insistent, so varied, so effective in pulling centrifugally away from the center of close domestic interests.

Under our industrial form of civilization we have obviously a situation markedly different. There are more rapid, changing movements of social life, of work, of play, and of thought. The circle of interests has widened tremendously and old limits have fallen to reveal in clear glance a farther horizon. Outside the home, there is a life more complicated and fascinating, full of curious objects, resounding activities, stimulating adventures: a world that adds elaborately, from an early age, to the relatively simple mental pattern of the home. This obvious, impressive immensity of a richly cultivated civilization—this siege, as it were, of the home by the lively world without the domestic four walls—naturally makes for a more readily aroused sentiment of independence. Young men and women—or boys and girls—go forth into the world more decidedly and at an earlier age. True, many of them are sent from home by their parents for the purpose of higher education; but the broadening of outside interests, the reception of new points of view, and the consequent tendency away from exclusive family ties is still the same.

The young, at least of the middle classes and the skilled workers, are not put to the hard work of life so early. They do, however—whether at college in a worldly and relatively free environment or independently at work for themselves—break away, in a vital (and a wholesome) sense, from the mould of the family.

The change is just as notable in those who live at home. They, too, although remaining in the family circle, do not have their interests confined narrowly to that circle. Nor do they have the old tendency to let their individuality be dominated by if not lost in the family group—which means, of course, that they are less under the indirectly emotional and the directly authoritative sway of their parents. The old-fashioned father was a sort of tyrant in his little domestic kingdom; often a benevolent tyrant, but wielding arbitrary authority none the less. External influences did not weigh so heavily with members of the family. But now the youthful members of the family, though still at home, have a wider life outside the family group. The great increase in reading, travel and communication multiplies their interests and their points of ready contact. They have part in an enormously expanded social life. They have many interesting things to do in the evenings, besides staying at home. They are less tightly bound to family associations—or less exclusively, for they have added bonds of interest; though it does not follow that the natural bonds of affection are weaker. The idea of living one's own life is more decidedly marked and asserts itself in the minds of the young earlier than it did in other days: it is more significant than merely earning one's own living—it is the psychology of self-realization as an individual.

Work, which formerly centered to a great degree in the home, is now almost entirely separated from the home

and is carried on under extremely different conditions, in factories, stores and offices—an environment the very opposite of the domestic. Taking the average, it may be said that the greater part of life today is spent away from home. Where home interests were once in the ascendancy, they are now far from dominating in extent, relative to other interests, and family influence is less powerful in determining the way of life, the thoughts, and the associations of the domestic group.

Is it such a dreadful picture? We see here an inevitable situation, one that no amount of complaining can alter, one that must have grown out of the new industrial character of society and the great expansion of social interests. It does not mean that the home is destroyed and that the family is broken up, as we are melodramatically told. Family ties, insofar as they are natural and not oppressive and not incompatible with the larger environment outside the home, still hold. Only, they are not so exclusive, not so tightly binding. And that is well. Society can progress only by the broadening of interests. It can, after all is said, progress only by the freer movements of the individual, drawn to vital, aspiring expression by more varied contacts and opportunities. The essence of family life (the virtue and wholesomeness of it) is not a narrow, exclusive community of interests. It is not a matter of thinking and living constantly close together and with the same ideas, the same habits. It is not a question of whether youth spends more or less time within the family group. Its natural essence is affection, and there is no evidence that this has lessened. And as for the chief practical business of the home—that of raising children to the point where they can enter life for themselves—this has nothing to do with the steps taken by youth, with its variety of interests and range of movements, after it has reached

the age of self-determination and individual responsibility.

In truth, the best thing for any person is to get away from family domination and exclusive family interests at the earliest possible age. Warnings are plentifully uttered against departing from the influence of home and parents. But not enough is said about the cramping of character and often the very great unhappiness that is caused by an excessive subservience to that influence. Many lives have been spoiled by sternly dictatorial parents, by parents who have trained their children unwisely to dependence and imitativeness, and by parents whose selfish, egotistic love has stifled individuality in their offspring. It is a tendency of parents to make their children like themselves; and that is certainly a bad feature of family life, which at present is most effectively corrected by outside influences. What we see, even so, is that the home and family solidly endures as an institution. It carries out steadily—and more efficiently than ever in our age of scientific knowledge, universal education and humane viewpoint—its really essential business of raising children. The family affections (which, however, tend to produce a lot of confusing emotional fixations) are strong, though varied naturally and wholesomely by wider interests and affections outside the home. There has been a change, apparent to the most casual observer—but, we cannot deny, a natural development, which can only be accepted, and which is actually seen to be a good one. The confusion lies in saying that because the family has changed, it has therefore decayed. It is healthy enough—healthier indeed for the fresh air and stimulating vistas enjoyed through windows open to the great world.

There is another characteristic of the present-day American family which must be specially taken into ac-

count—and that is its size. That, too, has changed. We can say that the reduced size of families has been a factor in getting away from the overwhelming nature of domestic interests. These interests would certainly loom larger, would more dominate the point of view, in a numerous family. Such a family would have more distractions, more obligations, and would resemble more a small, narrow, and exacting world in itself. There would be in such a family less moving and breathing space for interests beyond the home. Family life would be more insistent, more ingrown, and more confused by close, intense emotional interests and adjustments in a narrow sphere. The small family affords both parents and children a better chance to act freely, individually in the wider theater of life. Home interests are less demanding, social interests are more easily followed.

The same moralists who deplore the general change in family life—the breakdown of its old intensity and isolation by the drawing power of new social interests—at the same time find it alarming that birth control is so widely practiced. They talk dogmatically of “race suicide”—but they say nothing of the marked decrease of infant mortality, and the greatly improved opportunities of wholesome raising, education, and a start in life which a family of two or three children have compared with a family of ten or fifteen children.

Anyway, birth control is now definitely and will be increasingly the policy of civilization. Among intelligent people the old idea has been abandoned that parents need endure a lifelong slavery, and grow old before their time, in raising an unlimited brood of children; and that children should be brought into the world who cannot by any economic possibility be raised properly by their parents. It is the quality of human beings, not the quantity, that

counts in the modern view. Instead of "race suicide" we have the growing ideal of race culture and opportunity. Family life today is just as secure as ever but fortunately less ingrown, and it is a great deal happier, more comfortable, more brightened by other interests—and, yes, more intimate and human, for children regard their parents not as masters, but familiarly as human beings.

2. CHALLENGING THE ELDERS

Among other forms of restrictive rule that have been challenged by the new spirit of America today, none is (or was) more significant than the rule of the elders. It is not necessary to dwell extremely upon that rule—which many would call tyranny. It was not a conscious conspiracy nor a completely successful one. Youth, when strong and brilliant enough, has always been able to make a place for itself. But it is undoubtedly true that one of the solid facts of the old-fashioned scheme of life, which moralists—especially aging moralists—regret was the submissiveness which, on the whole, the young were inclined to feel in the presence of the old. The wisdom of age (which does not necessarily mean the wisdom of the ages) was respected a good deal more than it deserved. Or, rather, mere age was too confidently identified with wisdom.

It is a temperamental difference—a separation of years and heartbeats—that perhaps can never be quite resolved. It would be rash to say that youth understands age, or that age understands youth, better today than formerly. There is still a lack of sympathy which even reflects itself in intolerance. Youth, however, is now more independent and self-assured. It is more ready to match its enthusiasm and feeling about life—its desires and ambitions—against the experience of age. This greater

readiness is due, not so much to any change in the essential quality or temperament of youth, but to opportunity —there is more social tolerance and favor shown to youth. It is not so commonly believed that a young man or woman is something of a fool and can only safely be guided by the dictation and direction of the elders. The initiative of new, vigorous blood is welcomed rather than frowned upon with displeasure or suspicion. In the family, we have seen that the young have gone far in winning the recognition of personality. They have emancipated themselves from the excessive domestic rule of the elders. The same tendency is observed in society at large. In politics, in business, in the professions and the arts youth more quickly secures its own. A dignified, elderly manner is no longer required in positions of responsibility. Alert youthfulness, the brimming spirit of the virile hopeful years, is better. We are less prompted to say that a man is too young for this or that: we are only interested in whether he is capable.

True, young blood, young energy, young ideas have always been indispensable in carrying on the business of life. The difference, however, is in the exception that we should at once make—that of *young ideas*. It is precisely their ideas which the young are more free to assert and initiate, and which they utter more boldly. It may be said, not unfairly, that young energy was more likely in the old-fashioned time to be bound by old ideas. Nowadays ideas—the ideas that apply to morals, belief and work—are not beholden for importance to years and gray hairs and a tone of paternal wisdom. We do not assume that a man is not well-prepared for life, that his viewpoint is not to be seriously regarded, until he has acquired the protective coloration of compromise and conservatism; until he has become, not wiser, but quieter and conventionally

more tractable; until he has lost the fresh spirit of daring and hope. Certainly, age brings experience—and it may bring wisdom. But if the man at the end of life prides himself upon having learned by experience, so must the man at the beginning of life go to the same school. And the prejudices which pass for wisdom are more apt to be challenged by youth. Nothing can be more harmful to youth than to take on trust, with respectful credulity, the prejudices of age.

It seems plain that we are less ruled by the psychology and prejudices of the elders. The old admonitions fall upon less receptive ears. This attitude is more obvious with regard to behavior than definitely, thoughtfully held intellectual beliefs. It will be agreed that the young today, putting it quite simply, show an inclination—indeed, a determination—to do more as they please. The copy-book school of morality, which was once so flourishing, has fallen into disrepute. It is not even honored by serious argument. It is merely treated as a joke. Well, it is (or was) a joke—it was puerile—and it cannot be said that it was ever very helpful. It was really calculated to discourage, rather than to inspire and guide, what is called the good life. Besides, not even the elders, who recommended those precepts to the young with solemn countenance and ominous shaking of heads, lived by them in actual practice. Young folks who were taught the strict and lifeless virtues were bound to be disillusioned. They found indeed that there was a real atmosphere of puritanical gloom and oppressive authority—that this theory of life was rigidly upheld even when it was violated in deeds. But they discovered soon enough that the virtue and honesty and kindness and high ideals that were so narrowly illustrated in the books were not applied realistically, nor meant to be so applied, to life.

What they were taught, in fact, was not virtue but orthodoxy.

It is a wonder to me that young people have not, even yet, caught on to the bunk of old men's (and old women's) alleged wisdom more than they have. As a rule the old are simply the preachers of orthodoxy and compromise and the gospel of letting things be as they are. The old resent inquiry and change. They have not the passion for knowledge or for liberty that youth, at its best, displays, and that it certainly is more apt to display than age. To be sure, platitudes of common sense which are unimpeachable come from the lips of the old—who have, let us add, had this common sense pounded into them by their persistent violations of it—who are the readier to tell others what they should not do because these are things which they (the old) have done. But this sort of advice betrays itself by the assumption that men have only to be told without having to learn for themselves; that perfection of conduct can be attained easily by giving heed to older, wiser speech. If that had been true, one generation would have been enough to make human nature perfect.

On the other hand, a great deal of the pretended wisdom that comes from the elders is in the form of dogma and prejudice which, upon a real examination, is seen to be false, misleading, unnatural. Insofar as the counsel and rule of the elders in old-fashioned America was a matter of Puritanism and piety and a narrow orthodoxy, it was wrong and it is a happy sign of progress that it has come to be more effectively challenged. It is good that youth is no longer so shameful and fearful of its natural impulses—that it tends more toward self-expression than self-denial—that it is more smiling than somber, and free of fettered creeds. It is most excellent

proof that the world moves and humanity grows when we see that youth is not submissive as of old to stifling piety nor held in awe of theological doctrine. It is better that youth should have an increased will to make its own life, and not go tamely along in a rut. It is rational that we should cease to judge ideas by tradition, that we should object to the confusion of age with wisdom, that we should be more impressed by facts than by precepts and apply realistic tests to the conduct of life. In challenging the rule of the elders—*i. e.*, the rule of orthodoxy and tradition—we are separating the sham from the genuine and debunking the bunk that has come down to us heavily laden with respectability.

3. THE INTELLECTUAL CHANGE

Intellectual currents in America today will be more fully considered in other chapters—the new status of religion, for example, demands a full and separate treatment, and similarly important are the changes in other branches of thought—but a general emphasis must be given here to the support that our new freedom has in new ideas. After duly laying stress upon the material, economic alteration of society; after pointing out the effects of industrialism upon family life; after considering the modern independence of youth: we have still to look at this emancipation from another, from the intellectual, point of view. Social-economic change is not simply a process of blind, dull, material pressure—of a meaningless shifting about in relations—but it is accompanied by a stimulus of thought that is in essence revolutionary. If we imagine the old Puritanism and piety, the old stern rule of the elders, still intellectually in the ascendancy in spite of the modern economic order (and, of course, we cannot imagine any such thing) then we

should have to reduce considerably our picture of modernism; we should have to imagine the paradox, decidedly strange indeed, of a world materially transformed but mentally living in the old atmosphere.

But with the rise of modern industry and the quickening, broadening activities of life there came also a liberating power of *ideas*. It was a new world, and a new type of mind—rebellious, critical, experimental—that developed to deal with this world: a new type, that is to say, in its urgent, widespread influence: a new type in the importance of its direct challenge to the America of the Puritan Fathers and their spiritual heirs. One great influence, apart from any special movement or school of thought, which helped to break down the prison walls of orthodoxy and lead men generally into a freer life was the growth of popular education. Many people do not realize how recent *popular education* is and how powerfully it has affected the outlook of humanity. It is, in fact, the development of a century. A hundred years ago the majority in Europe and America were not only uneducated—touched not at all by the spirit of culture—with-out the stimulation of thinking curiosity: but illiteracy was the rule rather than the exception. The masses had no conception of mental freedom. They were not only in a prison but they couldn't see light through their cell windows.

Ignorance, certainly, is an illuminating explanation of a servile society—physically or mentally. People who do not think, who do not know, who are not critical are more easily led and can be more firmly kept in subservience to a stern orthodoxy than people who are even moderately educated. In fact, universal education and inquiry is the greatest force in opposition to tyranny and orthodoxy. Knowledge makes heretics. Thought makes

rebels. When ideas are popularly discussed, when there is a general interest in what men are learning and thinking, a cramped authoritarian view of life cannot be sustained. Such a view may still assert itself, but it has not the power absolutely to enforce itself.

So, we can understand the past better when we realize that popular education is vitally and distinctively a phenomenon of modern times. The average man today does not have to be an original thinker nor possess a keenly penetrating intellect to perceive the terrible absurdity and stupidity of the age-long submission to political despotism and ecclesiastical dogmatism. Medievalism appears to him so utterly preposterous that he wonders why it was accepted as a mode of life by humanity. One *why*, of course, leads to another and no simple answer covers the subject. But when we know that the vast majority were ignorant, that they could not even read and write, it is less difficult to understand why they submitted to follies and outrages that would be unthinkable in this enlightened modern world, where we are generally well-educated, curious, articulate, and conscious of the rights of personality and the progressive possibilities of life. We could not expect the fruits of happiness and rational living from the soil of sordid, stolid ignorance.

Now, the Puritan America of the past century was not so low as medieval ignorance (although in its religion, which was such a tremendous force in its life, there was apparently little advance) nor was it as high as modern education. There was nothing comparable to the intellectual activity of today, either in liveliness, extent, or bold outlook. Education was crude, provincial and dominated by a narrow moral viewpoint. It was elementary and so far good as a beginning, but it appears strikingly poor in contrast with the broad education that we have

today. Scientific knowledge was ignored. It was an age which, though already well on the way to being socially and physically changed by the results of scientific invention, had no inkling of a scientific conception of life. The political thought of America was provincial, violently partisan, and unenlightened by a view of world history. Culture was feeble, sporadic and suspected. It could not flourish in the gloomy air of Puritanism.

Religion influenced the popular mind to a degree that is well-nigh incredible today. Preachers were really leaders of opinion. Creeds were considered devoutly as realities. The human, rational criteria of our day were not then acknowledged. There were rules of Scripture and church doctrine for everything—and it was very important for a man to square himself with the Apostles, which were responsible for a good deal of theological legerdemain. There was not much appreciation of the beauty and joy of life: all that was smothered by the dark and musty creeds, and was as alien as the North Pole to that life of bilious piety—but no, the North Pole might have been taken for an American landmark. It might have been, except for the vividly imagined Hell of Puritan theology, whose fires were still going strong in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The fear of Hell never did make men good. But it was sufficiently effective in making them superstitious, intolerant, harsh, and mentally servile. Hell was obviously a great card for bigotry to hold, and the card was played persistently for all it was worth. And whatever effect the belief in Hell may have had upon practical conduct, that and similar doctrines had the effect of paralyzing the mind. Believing such doctrines, men and women were evidently far from any conception of mental freedom. They were theological slaves.

Under the sway of such beliefs, every relation of life had the mark of servitude. Not only the family, the school and the church was a prison—but society was a prison. Already, in the days just before Ingersoll came iconoclastically to the fore and the Darwinian conception of evolution came as a shock and then as a jail delivery, so to speak, material changes were rapidly taking place in American society. The economic doom of the old order was being clearly written, although of course men are always slow in their recognition of a new order. Yet America was still firmly in the grip of archaic ideas, religious, moral, and social. Then came new intellectual forces to join with material forces in bringing America out of its prison of Puritanism and piety. Science did not simply give us machines—it gave us, more importantly in the long view, a new conception of ourselves and the universe. Darwinism—the idea of evolution—was a liberating influence. The agnostics and rationalists of the scientific world, and of the literary and intellectual world that was scientifically enlightened, struck at the old theological foundations. Broadly, fundamentally and in detail the pre-scientific view of life was shown to be foolish and untenable; without evidence; riddled by facts; hopelessly inadequate—worthless indeed—as a guide for humanity. There was spread gradually a new standard of belief: not belief through faith, not belief because someone supposedly in authority said thus and so, but belief soundly established by reason and investigation. Here was nothing less than a revolution of the first importance: the storming from without, the rebellion from within, against the very prison of a mentally enslaved society. The critical type of mind became familiar.

Certainly, the old theology—the old view of life

and its narrow, dogmatic rules, moral and social—was defended with energy and there was by no means a sudden intellectual emancipation. With few exceptions, those who had spent their lives in the prison preferred to stay there. Indeed, for the prison to fall would seem to them the end of the world. Younger men, however, were more readily impressed by the new tendencies of thought. As this scientific movement of rationalism, which had such a strong foundation and powerful impetus in the facts of life and such a wide field before it, grew and spread—and as popular education advanced, both in extent and quality, affecting greater numbers and giving them a greater scope of knowledge—the walls of the prison were broken down. The authority of the jailers was more boldly and widely challenged. Men breathed an air of intellectual freedom. It was, then, owing to this new impulse of curiosity and bold speculation and critical re-valuation that men were able to take full advantage of the materially changing world. They had, what they most needed, freedom of thought and movement. They brought to this new world a new viewpoint.

We cannot ignore any factor of change, nor separate the intellectual from what is called (for the sake of distinction) the material or economic tendencies. But we can see that this shattering of the old—yes, the very old and traditional and sacred—bases of authority meant a shifting of social relations. It meant a liberalization of our attitude toward every vital interest of life. Under its influence, the psychology of the individual with relation to the family, to religion, to government, to morals must be changed: not as a question of this or that actual belief, but of a critical and independent attitude; and so was there inevitably a change in the psychology of youth with regard to age. We had, side by side, the growth of

the physical conditions and the intellectual readiness for freedom. We did not equip our prison with material conveniences; nor did we free ourselves mentally and stay in a prison of narrow material circumstances; we broke down the prison, although some yet prefer to linger mentally amid its ruins. And we are kind to those who would still be our jailers—we let them keep the keys, while we go freely on our way.

CHAPTER VI

The Modern American Workingman Has the Sense of Freedom and a Certain Relative Advantage Over His “*“Betters”*”

1. MANNERS—DEMOCRATIC STYLE

MANNERS—the facts concerning the simple daily behavior of man to man—are important in studying any society. Here I use the term “manners” most broadly and have in mind something more than superficial forms of social usage, something more than merely outward skin-deep refinement. I have regard, most inclusively, for the way men treat and value one another: for their sense of kindliness and fair dealing and their recognition of one another’s rights. It will be agreed that a man may display the most perfect polish on the surface, yet be at heart supercilious and inconsiderate and even cruel. Or within the limits of a certain class (among those whom he is willing to admit as his equals) he may behave courteously, while beyond those limits he has scant regard for the dictates of humanity as such—he conducts himself, in a word, toward his fellow men according to distinctions of social rank or financial place or power that must be respected. In the absence of such potent recommendations to his favor, he will treat his fellow man scornfully and shabbily. On the contrary, a certain roughness of manners—an inexpertness in the nice technique of politeness—may accompany a fine sense of

consideration and a kindly, essentially just recognition of human values. Good manners, of course, include at their best both gracefulness and graciousness. But we know very well that either quality may be present without the other.

As a matter of fact, considered superficially from the standpoint of refinement, the manners of aristocratic society a century or more ago were not so very nice and if we go back a few centuries we observe a boorishness that would be unthinkable in the average member of American democratic society today. A great deal of bunk has been written about the elegant, superior, ultra-honorable code of aristocracy, in the days when aristocracy was supreme. It would be quite true to say that the manners of aristocracy have been improved by democracy, or by the general rise in civilization which has accompanied democratic progress. The so-called "point of honor" in aristocratic society was carried to a foolish, indeed an outrageous extreme, and did not necessarily imply a high development of character. Punctilios were emphasized, often, at the expense of a fundamentally honorable mode of behavior. And the notion of honor was quite narrowly restricted to intercourse among those who called themselves, by privilege of birth but not always by right of real character, gentlemen. Toward nine-tenths of his fellow men, the gentleman could conduct himself in crude, violent, absolutely mean fashion. The average man had no rights that the gentleman was bound to respect. Nor did his morals, nor his emotional or intellectual attitude toward life, have to be at all fine or discriminating for him to deserve the title of "gentleman." The code of honor was indeed quite narrow. One should not cheat at cards, nor lie (to an equal), nor betray the reputation of a woman; yet one might be cruel, and intolerant, and in-

THE AMERICAN WORKINGMAN TODAY 99

different to human rights generally. And, in fact, with many (if not with most) gentlemen honor was merely an outwardly observed matter of mannerism or technique which did not signify an inward fineness of personality.

On the score of refinement alone, the aristocracy of old time and tradition was not much to boast of. At the very time, in the first half of the nineteenth century, that English visitors were ridiculing the bad manners of Americans (the badness of which no one today disputes) the conditions of English society were sufficiently disgraceful: the situation of the English common people was degraded almost beyond belief—there was certainly no sensitive social conscience—while the conduct of English gentlemen was notoriously licentious and corrupt. Not that I would strictly identify manners and morals. There is a considerable difference about morality, and some men may conscientiously (and cleanly, honorably, gracefully) commit what others regard as sins. But there is a kind of immorality that is cruel, and sordid, and disgusting. And that kind of immorality was found in plentiful evidence among the old aristocracy which we are told by bunk-shooters to regard as men of honor. We can only reply that our conception of honor has much broadened and that it includes all humanity, not simply a special class, in its beneficent range. Also it lays less stress upon outward forms and more stress upon the essentials of fair, kindly dealing between man and man.

Yet as regards refinement most technically considered, what was the truth about the old aristocracy? With what we modernly (and as a new and significant term) call progress—that is to say, with liberalism and democracy—came a betterment of manners and of all conditions. But mediievally, men lived even on the upper levels in a rough and dirty style. Bathing was uncommon.

Coarseness of speech and action was customary even in polite society. Acts that the ordinary man, making no pretensions to particular politeness, would be ashamed of today were then open and unashamed. Common though ugly necessities were yielded to in public. Things we consider offensive were then regarded as quite a matter of course. The usual behavior of kings and nobles was then of a kind that can only be matched today by the manners of the very lowest, most uneducated, most unrefined class. It is, indeed, rather instructive to observe that in the boasted days of simple faith bestial indulgence was far more familiar—more tolerated in high as well as in low society—than is the case today: that the growth of skepticism and a lack of veneration for ancient superstitions has coincided with a learning of better manners. Yet, as I have said, it is not only a question of refinement. The difference in America today—which is, at its best, a difference of democratic society—extends more significantly to the social values of man and man. Here, indeed, there has been less change as between the old and the new America than between America and the old, traditionally feudal and aristocratic world of Europe. It is true that in the beginning of our country, in colonial society, the snobbish traditions of the old world were maintained and the common man, in the old and settled centers of the East, was held inferior to the “better classes,” even after the Revolution. Democracy did not suddenly spring into being as a pure and perfect ideal—nor is it observable in such excellence today.

There was, however, one condition that made for independence of manners: the constantly extending frontier, which made it possible for Americans to escape the environment of snobbishness and class exclusiveness, and stand independently, as natural men, upon their own

feet. This was an even more important factor than the theoretical sentiments of democracy and liberty which were enunciated by the Revolutionary leaders. To be sure, those sentiments were important and indicated the modern trend. But they were, save in a few instances, not very deep nor sincere. They meant, in real terms, the political equality of men who belonged to the favored, ruling class. They were not intended to include the raw, rough, raucous common people. Here we must not be too sweeping. We must recognize a difference between the Jeffersonians and the Hamiltonians—or, to tell the truth, the Washingtonians, for George Washington really had no such belief in democracy as Jefferson had. Such men as Jefferson, Paine, and Franklin were true democrats. Other leaders, such as Washington and Hamilton and Adams, were skeptics—they were on this ground in sympathy with the trend of modernistic thought—but they had very little regard for or confidence in the common people. Their belief in intellectual liberty was greater than their belief in social equality or in political democracy.

But the conditions of actual pioneering encouraged a spirit of independence which no theory could have demonstrated half so well. In fighting the wilderness, men were necessarily seen upon a level of natural merit—equality of power and resourcefulness and courage—rather than in a viewpoint of artificial rank. The man of rank might prove a failure. The man of common origin might (and generally did) prove a success. This might well be explained by the fact that the common man was more used to hardship and self-denial than the man of aristocratic rearing. The genuine aristocrat, after all, depends upon the artificial privileges and protections of an aristocratic society. Place him on an equal basis with

the commoner and he may find himself beaten. The fact is that the qualities which were esteemed in an artificially separated society were not the qualities demanded by the hard, rough, practical conditions of the frontier. So, under such natural conditions did democracy grow in this country. Men were tried in a different school and new aptitudes, encouraged by the exigencies of this new life, were brought to the front.

It was peculiarly American that such a man as Abraham Lincoln, for example, should ascend to the highest place in the Republic. His background was one of poverty and commonness. His manners were not those of the privileged, polite class—they were at once cruder and more essentially human. He was educated in the rough school of the common life, and out of that difficult but realistic school he forged the materials of power and greatness. In the old, aristocratic society of Europe, Lincoln would have had small chance. But in the new, democratic society of America he advanced to the front and demonstrated his natural power: because behind him was a democratic society, ready to recognize his strong nature without false considerations of birth and privilege.

It may be replied that democracy has raised inferior men to office, and even that it tends to destroy an aristocratic freedom of opinion: yet we must admit that under the old régimes of monarchy and aristocracy men of very poor powers and principles were elevated to high places, and that they also depended, not perhaps upon their ability to persuade the masses, but upon their facility in the shameful arts of the courtier. It certainly cannot be shown that under monarchy and aristocracy fine principle, ability, and independence have had a better chance than under democracy. It may be said that democracy has faults peculiar to itself: but not *worse* faults than

were known and disastrously effective under the rule of kings and the privileged ascendancy of nobles. In fact, under democracy we are in better case, for we are at least able to condemn the triumphs of mediocrity, whereas in former times few men dared (and then only perilously) to object to the victories of incompetent aristocracy.

It may also be said, truly enough, that democratic society has within itself the seeds of corruption—as what society does not? No doubt as the growth of society has tended more toward the complex and highly privileged, as there have come fixations of power and privilege, this modern democratic tendency has been weakened. Even so, we must admit that this weakening has been one of relative power rather than of attitude. The common man of today in America is more of a “wage slave,” as he is designated by the Socialists, than his ancestor of the frontier. Those who are richer and more powerful than he are more distinctly marked and are not escapable. He must bargain and sell his goods or his labor more according to the terms of an intricately, closely organized society. Economically he cannot be called a free man, although he does have the right (the legal right, which does not mean always an actual right) to choose his terms and kind of work.

He is quite often, certainly in the very skilled trades, a well-paid “wage slave.” Life, with all its greater variety, is reduced to fairly simple rules: too simple and logically open to considerable question, as the skeptic will tell you. Life for the average American is a thing of standardized amusements; of mechanical facilities that can be quite simply used without understanding them. In a word, it is a very close approach to a “fool-proof” civilization. There is even the pleasure of reading (or the

easier pastime of listening to the radio) without the labor of thinking—and the average man no doubt appreciates this boon, especially since he enjoys at the same time the self-flattering notion that he *does* think.

And for all his economic disabilities, the average American today enjoys a social dignity and freedom that were unknown to the common people in past times. Even in his economic relations he is not burdened with the nature and degree of slavery that was required of a workingman a century ago. Here, of course, the contrast is more marked with European conditions. The pioneer life of America, while it entailed great physical hardships (which no doubt seem greater to us in retrospect than if we had been reared to them) did carry with it a great deal of social freedom. Today there is perhaps a diminished sense of social equality, with a compensating decrease in physical difficulties, and with also a greater measure of moral freedom. The average man is not perhaps greatly worried by some social snobbishness—certainly no intelligent person loses sleep over this sort of absurd folly—while he does appreciate his freedom of behavior. No one can deny the important gain of having escaped from the prison of Puritanism.

Once away from the job, the modern workingman is free to conduct himself very much as he pleases—at least in the simple, personal ways of behavior. It is true that he cannot safely nor openly express heretical ideas against which there are strong public prejudices. Well, he doesn't care for that form of self-expression—he has as a rule nothing startling to express intellectually. It is equally true that he is under no legal compulsion to profess belief in certain doctrines. He does not have to go to church—although in small communities men often profess interest in or allegiance to religion for business

reasons. He can in fact be very little bothered by religion, can live quite free from its annoyances and encumbrances. Doubtless in his moral conduct, he is often forced into a policy of secrecy. But the technique of "getting away" with things is pretty well understood by him. Usually it is managed without much difficulty, although bad luck may happen.

One striking feature of American life is often remarked by observers who have an eye for the humorous inconsistencies of their fellow men: namely, the fact that America is prolific in the passing of laws which are thereafter prudently ignored. Is it thought that there is some magic virtue in a law which does not extend to its observance? The truth is rather, I think, that laws are made by complaisant politicians, at the behest of morally busy minorities, and that the average man remains indifferent to them. He is too busy making a living and doing, anyway, about what he pleases to pay attention to these laws which indeed multiply past all counting and all possibility—likelihood—of enforcement. I do not believe this policy of indifference is a good one. Men who believe in freedom should have more vigilance and courage in their convictions. Nor should there be the selfish and dishonest idea of expediency which argues that one can disobey an unpleasant law but that it may be good for others. Still, the policy of evading foolish laws is better than would be a general social policy of intolerance. There is a cynical common sense about it, making for a large amount of freedom in practice, although we should prefer a more enlightened attitude of protest and prevention. As matters stand, the American is theoretically a great believer in laws; actually he doesn't regard a law very seriously until it pinches him—and then he howls. And if he is ill-

natured, he is not satisfied until someone else is similarly punished.

2. THE RIGHTS OF MAN

I have said that in discussing manners in democratic society more is implied than the surface of behavior. In fact, the real advance which democracy can fairly show is most marked in the field of human rights. It cannot be denied that a fairer attitude is held toward the human personality: that while there is still much to be desired in respect of such values, which are certainly not sensitive nor ideal, there is a far better situation than obtained under the rule of monarchy or aristocracy. To put it plainly, it is glaring bad manners to display a caste-dictated, false, and shabby valuation of one's fellows. Snobbishness is notoriously ill-mannered. We judge others unfairly and unintelligently when we value them according to their possessions and their social position.

No doubt these things mean something—but what do they mean? The man who possesses a great deal of money may have been luckier than another, or more likely he has devoted more thought—or if you will, shrewder and more persistent thought—to the business of money-making. His bank balance does not give his true rating in human worthiness, in the finer qualities of character, in range of culture or charm of personality. Take the character of our friend Babbitt, who is successful and even able within his limits, but who has obvious defects of narrowness and blatancy. Take the man who has obtained money and power by a policy of ruthlessness. We may respect his strength, but we cannot have much love for his character. Nor can we say that, for all his high position, he has good manners if he uses his power arrogantly and meanly. Rulers of men are very

apt to exhibit atrocious manners: power breeds such an attitude: the individual becomes vastly over-conceited and becomes accustomed to an adulation that is, at its worst, debasing to character and that may very easily appear in a ridiculous light. Here I do not refer to a certain naïve vanity, that is really charming; which we can readily forgive, and which is often accompanied by very fine qualities of discriminating behavior. It is well for us to pardon one another's simple vanities, but we are more inclined to resent arrogance and an ill-mannered, domineering attitude.

A system of rank and caste, then, tends to create a habit of cruelty and contempt toward inferiors, so-called, although they may have naturally superior qualities. At any rate, it is obviously unfair to deprive men of the opportunity to demonstrate or develop good qualities. It is an outrage of social manners to say to any person, arbitrarily, that he shall remain without hope at the bottom of the scale: that he shall be condemned doubly—condemned in fact and condemned with unfair judgment—as an inferior. Take, for example, the Southern position of condemning a Negro to a menial place in society; and then saying that the Negro is fit for nothing else. It is quite plain that he is given no chance to demonstrate his fitness. The case is not one of true inferiority but of injustice. And while the perpetrators of injustice may be charmingly polished, they are basically guilty of mean, revolting manners. Not consciously perhaps—we all rationalize our prejudices—but at least they so appear to one who is touched by the spirit of humanity.

For true good manners are humane, sympathetic, tolerant manners. They come from a nice perception of the rights of others. That perception does not generally exist in a fine degree under democracy. The prejudices of the

people and of social classes more or less freely formed are bad enough. The deeper understanding of and respect for the human personality cannot be said to exist in our democratic society. There is, for instance, the bad-mannered feeling toward Negroes; toward foreigners; toward outspoken heretics in politics and religion; toward persons who boldly dissent from the moral opinions to which lip service is thought due even if they are violated in practice. Yes, democracy has its prejudices; but they are not as extreme, not as unescapable, not as socially oppressive as the prejudices of an aristocratic society.

Perhaps the main difference is that they give more liberty and self-respect to the common man. As a consequence, it is true that the common man ascribes to himself excessive virtues. He may have the delusion that majorities are necessarily right while minorities are, by mere disparity of numbers, in the wrong. He may be lacking in respect for intellectual eminence, excellence of character, and high moral courage. He may consider life very crudely in terms of self-seeking and be little capable of appreciating love of truth and a manly, lone stand for principle's sake. I would not say that our democracy, taken as an average, has ideals of striking loftiness. It is true that Americans are at times remarkably swayed by idealistic appeals—or, to put it better, moral appeals—yet their vanity is hugely flattered in the process and they do not for long lose sight of self-interest. Their so-called idealism is more a matter of confusion than a clear perception of values.

But it is unfair to judge democratic behavior by what we regard as the ideal behavior of man in a more nearly perfect society. It is not a devastating criticism of democracy to say that it is not perfect, although it is useful to

point out its imperfections. The theory of progress does not mean—certainly not immediately—the theory of perfection. What we mainly have to ask is whether there has been an improvement in the state of the human race: whether, taking mankind as a whole, rights and opportunities have increased: and to this question it seems plain that the answer is largely in the affirmative. Humanity—not a certain ideal of humanity but humanity in its actual daily semblance—is more respected today than in any past age. There have been exalted ideals proclaimed by philosophers and humanitarians in the past. There have been sensitive men who have loved justice and dwelt fondly on the picture of a fairer, freer world.

But there has not been anything like the wide recognition of human rights that we have in our age. It is far more, too, than merely a sentimental recognition. The idea is more generally admitted that a free world is a safer, more agreeable world than one which is kept in slavery. We realize that education is the hope of human progress. We know that kindness and fair dealing pay—that from the standpoint of highly intelligent selfishness (yet an obvious selfishness, after all, which it is strange men do not more plainly see) every advance in the conditions of mankind at large is better for the individual. We may believe in liberty, let us say, for the quite simple reason that we desire freedom and see increased safety in the amount of freedom which can be generally obtained. We may advocate justice because thus we protect ourselves from possible injustice. We may insist upon regarding men fairly as men because we wish to be so regarded ourselves—because we feel that to be respected for our social or financial position is not to be rated at our best or true value.

And back of these views is, I repeat, a certain theory

of manners. Call it a democratic theory; or a humane theory; or the truly aristocratic theory, judging aristocracy from an idealistic rather than an historical standpoint. It is, at any rate, a theory that is better in sensitiveness and values than any theory which has widely prevailed in the past history of humanity. It is a view that places merit upon a natural basis; that regards the individual for what he is and does, not for what he has nor for what his ancestors may have been; that scorns to demand for oneself any more than a simple and tolerant estimate of one's personality, and that, furthermore—and this socially is perhaps the most important point—recognizes certain natural rights in human beings whether or not they are wise or graceful or clever.

Of course, if a man is markedly deficient in wisdom, we do not recognize his authority in the field of opinion. As a matter of fact, we are suspicious of the idea of authority first and last. And if a man is not charming or interesting, it is pretty certain that we will not wish to spend much time in his company. But that is no reason why we should want to press or degrade him nor any reason why we should fail in simple courtesy toward him. And surely it is a poor spirit that takes pride in lording it over an inferior. It is in the company of our equals—our intellectual, characterful equals—that we can really feel honest pride. We may tolerate, we may pity, a man who is dull and spiritless: but if we take any great pleasure in asserting our superiority over such a man—well, we only demonstrate a strain of inferiority in ourselves.

Again, the man of true capacity for appreciation is quite ready to pay due tribute to superior character and intelligence in other men: he has a sensitive deference for greatness or fineness wherever it may be found. He may even feel a certain pride in his ability and willing-

ness to recognize greater merit—for, truly, our appreciations are in themselves achievements—achievements of sympathy and comprehension. This attitude carries with it, of course, no surrender of one's true dignity or rights. It is perfectly consistent with self-respect. It is really the man of bad manners who feels that he is lowering himself by paying deference to a great mind or character.

It is here that one may say democratic society often fails in its manners. It is right enough in its attitude toward main social equality. But it shows a frequent disposition to condemn or belittle real superiority: especially a kind of superiority which it cannot easily understand. Artists, unless they are of a sensational and very dramatic kind, are not apt to be esteemed by the common man. Concerning scientists he has quite vague ideas: particularly those who deal in the more abstract intellectual conceptions of science. The case is different when he is given a simple, positive invention that he can use for his convenience or entertainment. Thinkers of a heretical tendency (and, by the way, thinkers usually have that tendency) are not greatly appreciated by him. Yet he may be moved by definite appeals for freedom, which coincide with his natural desires, such for example as agitation for wide-open Sundays and arguments against Prohibition and reason (or invention) to make sex experience more liberal. Politicians as a rule he does not admire save on the lower levels. They must put on a garish, crude show to win his attention. The man of truly statesmanlike quality will not be taken at his true worth: for he is sure to alienate the masses on the score of their prejudices.

But can we say that values, in these and other fields of opinion, were more sensitive and lofty in other ages? Can it be said that aristocratic society offered superior

criteria? Exceptional men always have had exceptional ideas and standards of judgment. But aristocrats were not as a body exceptional men. They simply had more wealth and more privilege. They could cut a dashing figure, but at bottom, in any evaluation of real worth they did not amount to much; and the picture of them as elegant idlers is true enough. It is not really very logical to say that the show which they gave was worth the money. I believe that they were on the whole frauds—that mere “manners,” in the old aristocratic sense, had nothing like the value that was foolishly placed upon them—that democratic society here represents a decided advance. Robert Burns was nearer the truth: “A man’s a man for a’ that.” Pride of place, taken alone, is preposterous. It depends upon how one has attained that place. Good manners depend not upon artificial distinctions of rank and social usage, but upon genuine humanity. Abraham Lincoln had, essentially, better manners than many of his supercilious critics. Jefferson and Franklin were better-mannered men than Washington. Voltaire was a man of far better manners than the aristocratic, bigoted gentlemen who opposed him: although we should not forget that he had good friends among the aristocracy, who had an intellectual as well as an hereditary right to be called aristocrats. Let us say, then, that Voltaire was more truly a gentleman than Louis XV or Louis XVI—he was greater and finer than kings. Voltaire, although not a democrat in political theory, was a democrat in his respect for the rights of the common man. He was a democrat in his attitude toward the human personality. Lesser men felt that they could not depart from their arrogant attitude. Voltaire was great enough to take humanity on its merits. He loved toleration and justice. And, as I have said, the increase of toleration and justice has undoubt-

edly distinguished democratic society. We live in an age wherein, with all its defects of prejudice and snobbishness, the rights and the personality of the common man are more respected than ever before.

3. THE COMMON MAN'S ADVANTAGE

From one viewpoint—and a very important one—the common man has an advantage in modern democratic society. It is an advantage which is not sufficiently emphasized. Yet perhaps, after all, it is the average man's greatest privilege (if such a term may be employed) or his greatest guarantee of freedom. I refer to the fact that he does not have to make such pretensions nor conform to such narrow codes as others who rank above him in the social scale. The bourgeois or the inhabitant of the upper ranks of society or any man who pretends to power and prestige has a number of artificially created rules that he must obey. In some ways it can be said that a politician or a man of business or a follower of a profession—while having more power—is not as free as, say, the skilled workingman. I say the skilled workingman by preference because the unskilled worker is more obviously handicapped by economic disadvantages of low wages, uncertainty of employment, and the like.

But the common workingman of very particular and practiced trades in America has, really, a greater social freedom than those who are commonly regarded as his social superiors. He has no exacting social position to maintain. His private life is not so subject to general curiosity. It is not required of him that he pass muster as a "pillar of society." He is not a leader; not a guide; not a subject of special moral comparison. He has no very touchy and constantly exhibited reputation to keep or lose.

Class distinctions carry with them certain responsibilities. Of course, a banker has the money to indulge more secret immoralities—to finance a wider range of behavior than a printer. Yet the latter has the advantage over the banker, for society makes less demands upon him. The workingman is not in the trying position of one who must set an example. Let it be known that a printer, a plumber, a painter has been on an escapade—little will as a rule be thought of it. But if the banker or the leading merchant or the politician who has special reason to stand well with the community is caught *in flagrante delicto*, there is a many days' scandal resulting. People feel that according to one's social position one should more circumspectly conduct oneself. Scandal loves a shining mark—and the workingman does not shine brilliantly enough. He has therefore a greater freedom of action.

Perhaps this is not a moral way to view the conduct of human beings. I am inclined to view it as an unfair discrimination. Yet if the banker has the advantage of prestige, it may be fair enough that the printer should have the advantage of freedom. As we have been told often enough, "We can't have everything." Very likely there is a common-sense balance of equity in these things. Anyway, what concerns me here are the facts. Snobishness, social distinctions, may confer certain imagined advantages upon the banker. Yet why should these distinctions be regarded so enviously by the printer? It is my observation that there is really very little envy. The workingman appreciates his own freedom—and, while he may be a very liberal fellow indeed, he also appreciates the right cynically to talk about if not actually to criticize the banker. If our "leading citizens" insist upon standing out conspicuously, they should accept the responsibility of standing out for bad as for good.

Fortunately for him, the worker has no such obligation. He is expected only to do his work well and to pay his debts. Beyond that, his responsibility ceases. Here the difference is not perhaps one between aristocratic and democratic society. It is not recorded that in olden times the morals of the common people worried the aristocrats—the latter were in fact willing enough to debauch those morals when opportunity offered. But in modern democratic society the workingman makes more money and is less restricted in his free social movement. He has a wider range of movement, and he is less apt to be challenged in his desires and activities. It may be true that the modern American workingman has no high ideals nor fine sensitive reactions, but he has at any rate the sense of freedom and a certain relative advantage over his "betterers" in his conduct. Legally, of course, he has the same rights of behavior as the banker. Actually, he has more freedom. It is a fair balance. Social prestige is balanced by moral freedom and *vice versa*. As regards manners, I do not know that there is much difference. For the manners of each circle are judged by that circle: no alien edicts hold good.

CHAPTER VII

American Life Moves More Rapidly, Which Raises the Question of Where It Is Headed and What Are Its Objects

1. ALL DRESSED UP

IN one of Sherwood Anderson's early novels (*Marching Men*) the hero is impressed by a queer mystical sense of the rhythm of mass action. He broods upon the tangled webs men weave in their chase after the pleasures and rewards of life. Finally, he organizes groups of men who just march, march, march with no discoverable plain object. The mere fact of marching in unison is supposed to have some significance. It is a tale of futility, of course, yet there is in it (whether clearly intended or not) a possible commentary on the life of the American crowd. It may indeed be considered a commentary on the life of the masses at any time, yet it may be said more peculiarly to apply to the crowd in our day and in our country, because here and now is the rush and go of the crowd more restless and presenting more angles of interest. Life moves more rapidly, which raises the question of where it is headed and what are its objects. Formerly men (at least the majority) lived simple and quiet lives. There were not so many things to engage their interest nor to keep them on the go. The admirer may call their lives calm, the critic may call them empty or stagnant—but at any rate they were not as glittering, variegated and speedy as the lives of the crowd today.

Years ago, in what we should now regard as relatively a quiet time—in the beginning of modern industrialism in England—John Ruskin, the writer who loved repose, gave a sarcastic definition of the modern ideal as he saw it: “No matter what you have, get more; no matter where you are, go somewhere else.” Is the American crowd, in the words of the familiar facetious line, “all dressed up with no place to go”? Superficially and even on a closer view, this might well seem to be true. And there is, after all, an undeniable suggestion of wisdom in Ruskin’s criticism. Action is certainly not the whole end and aim of life. It is not necessary for happiness—and surely not conducive to wisdom—to be always going somewhere, doing something, striving to get something, seeing something (a show, a parade, the crowd in its flashy and feverish movement, a ball game, or a street fight). In a word, there should be a place in every life for quiet thought, contemplative feeling about life, realization of one’s self. If it is true that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, it is also true that to be constantly on the go and never to sit quietly and look at life makes Jack a good deal of a scatterbrain. It is undoubtedly a great advantage of modern life that we can enjoy a vastly greater round of amusements and activities. We can travel more, see more, do more; it is the inevitable (and, taken sensibly, the beneficent) result of our age. Our ancestors were for the most part compelled to lead restricted, what might fairly be called dull and narrow, lives. We are under no such compulsion—but, on the other hand, why let ourselves be drawn incessantly into the modern hurly-burly without rhyme or reason? Why not enjoy both action and repose, our role as actors and our role as spectators of the show? It is our ideal possibility that today we can do both. We can loaf, as Whitman said, and invite our souls (or what-

ever may pass for our souls); yet at any time we can arise and join the jolly, jabbering, and in many respects jejune procession.

One reply can at once be made to the criticism of the rushing crowd. That reply is simply the statement of a fact: not all Americans, every day, follow this fast and admittedly picturesque pace. The crowd, in its individual members, is always changing. No two days—no two hours—is it the same. When we look from the window, or when we go out for a walk or for adventure, the crowd is always there. Taking our life as a whole, there is never any let-up of energy. Intense action, work, pleasure seeking are going on every hour of the twenty-four. Our machine civilization has its shifts of labor, endlessly replacing one another, so that every available hour is spent in keeping up the needs of this society of vast demands. Yet we may reasonably reflect that if we often enjoy peaceful moments away from the crowd, many others are in like case. They too have their moments of rest and their moments of activity. We have a far more populous country, and especially we have more people crowded into large cities. We live in an age that has undoubtedly been accelerated in its speed by the machine. The old isolation has given way to a newly quickened social scene.

So while there is always a crowd on the streets, in the theaters, at the ball games, at political meetings, and few fights or accidents or police raids are without a curious group of witnesses—while we can always see enormous crowds in rapid and mysterious motion (mysterious, for although their destination and aim is perhaps very simple, we do not know what they are)—while we easily visualize the American people as simply one big restless crowd, robbed however of personal identity, all merged in the moving mass—the fact remains that a good many people

stay quietly at home, many live as commonplace inactive lives as were ever lived in any age, many are soundly and virtuously asleep at an early hour on most nights, a stone's throw from the crowd yet as motionless as the stone that is not thrown. One moment you are a part of the crowd: the next moment your place is taken by someone else: you may die and be utterly at rest but the crowd will not cease nor diminish—rather it will grow, not only in size but in speed.

Bearing in mind, then, that we are not all at one time drawn along with the hurry and excitement of the crowd, there is another viewpoint which is worth a glance. If the crowd—or, say, any average member of the crowd—could express its philosophy, Ruskin might be answered as follows: Life is short. Why should we not see, feel, hear, taste, do all we can while here? If we stand aside, the years will pass just as inexorably and, when we are old, we may find that we are empty-handed. The essence of life, for most of us, is a very simple kind of activity and emotion. We live, fortunately for us, in an age that furnishes us endlessly and variously and brilliantly with opportunities for this kind of life. We don't know where we're going—and who does know? Philosophers and preachers have told us thus-and-so regarding the purpose of life—but their words are not convincing. So far as we can see, life is just living. And the more intensely and pleasurable we live, the more have we won when the game is over. So why not be on our way? We shall learn the comparatively simple rules that enable us to find our way about, to enjoy the show, to play the game: we shall watch our step: we shall be ourselves: we shall take the cash and let the credit go—after which, what have you? Sometimes we begrudge the hours of sleep—think of what we are

missing! We shall be quiet enough when we are dead. Our philosophy of life is to live.

From the viewpoint of an uninspired member of the crowd—from the viewpoint, let us say, of an extravert, one who lives outwardly and actively—that would not be a bad justification for taking advantage fully of this age of speed. One thing is certainly true: there is a difference of objectivity between this age and past ages when men believed this life to be only a brief, vain preparation for a future life. There is realism in getting the most out of what Omar called “a moment’s halt amid the waste”—only, in terms of the modern crowd life “halt” is scarcely the word. As for values, what one considers the best among realities, there enters the problem of individual choice. Omar may have been, in the eleventh century or the twentieth, better content with his wine, his books, and his thoughts. Some may prefer both action and reflection; others may choose to get action at second hand through observation tempered by reflection. No doubt the majority, today at any rate, would rather enjoy the most direct and active sensations. If a man be not a philosopher (using that term in a free rather than a technical sense), who shall make him one? That is no good reason why he should miss his kind of fun in life. It is enough to say that, whatever one’s viewpoint or values, this age offers the greatest variety of living. Not only is there more to do, but there is more to think about, and a far more interesting spectacle to watch; the observer as well as the actor gets more out of his brief time on earth.

It is always interesting—this American crowd. If it is not thoughtful, it is bright and lively. True, the emotions that move it are simple enough, though one cannot always simply foretell what direction they will take: curiosity—imagination—sensationalism—the immemorial loves and

desires, now more expeditiously satisfied: merely passing the time, and keeping away from loneliness and perplexity and their own thoughts (or mental emptiness), may explain a good deal of the crowd's life. These motives, be they simple or subtle, find more ready and ample expression. This American crowd has (what crowds have always most appreciated) bread and circuses: but how varied are their circuses—baseball, prizefights, polar expeditions, spectacular flights in the air, the movies, the races (horse, dog, or automobile), political campaigns, and (taking in every possible kind of excitement the world over) the daily newspapers, and finally (keeping them continually in the midst of things even though at home), the radio. These things do not involve brain trouble. They are striking and often gorgeous. They make modern life take on the character, superficially at least, of a mighty Arabian Nights' Entertainment—an entertainment that never ceases and that is forever showing some novelty, which is the crowd's substitute for originality. And this crowd rushes along in its automobiles, frequently enjoying the sheer sensation of speed more than any aspect of nature: feeling too, whatever it is doing, an exhilaration in the fact that it *is* a crowd. It engages vicariously in endurance contests, lasting for days. It has always some major scandal, furnished forth in detail by enterprising reporters. Almost daily it is delighted by wonderful new inventions. No wonder it has turned away from what preachers call "the life of the spirit." Some of us may regret that it is not more intelligent, that its emotions are not better controlled by reason, but we recognize its realistic good sense in turning away from "the life of the spirit"—an empty, deluded, shadow of life that belongs to a past age.

It may be said, broadly, that the American crowd is

realistic but not rational. By this is meant that it concerns itself with real things but that its judgment of values and relations is not so good. It is too easily fooled by the second-rate or worse. It mixes its realities irrationally; and takes them too passionately. It is sometimes childish, sometimes magnificent, sometimes tawdry, sometimes dangerous. Judge it as we will, the fact remains that we are interested. Actually the fireworks may be to a great extent puerile, but they make a vastly diverting show of noise and color. The crowd fascinates us, whereas many if not most of the individuals who compose it would bore us.

2. CHANGE AND CONSERVATISM

After all, we must qualify our statement that the American crowd is concerned with realities: this is only partly true—or it may be that we should widen our definition of realities. It is led astray by phrases and notions; and we may say indeed that no realities are more dangerous. These shibboleths may be intellectually false, but their influence is all too real. Comparatively, modern life is more realistic than past life. It has divested itself of a host of imaginary absurdities, terrors and false hopes and unrealizable desires. As the preachers view it, this crowd is certainly quite realistic. Thunder from Sinai means far less to it than the sound of a distant drum. It does not worry about its soul, but rather deals irrationally with the problems of this life. Its thought—as we should expect—does not keep pace with its active life.

Here we note a contrast, between the crowd's conservatism and its ready acceptance of—indeed its love of—merely objective change and novelty. It is always willing to move on to something else, save intellectually: there it stands still. It is forever trying to reconcile new

ways with old ideas, and fooling itself ludicrously in the process. In its physical life, the crowd responds immediately to change. Within twenty years, almost every outward aspect of the American crowd has changed. It has changed (in form and technique if not in essence) its ways of amusement. It has changed its fashions in dress, not once but many times. It has submitted over and over again to changes in its conditions of labor. It has changed its ways of travel, changing thereby its general pace of living. It has been "educated," as the advertisers would say, to endless new commodities and contrivances that have in a sense made over its daily life. It has submitted to changes in its style of newspapers. It has witnessed with interest, with naive wonder, changes in the architecture of its cities, and it thinks nothing of the destruction of a perfectly good building and the erection of a loftier skyscraper in its place. A new invention, changing some familiar detail of life, is hardly announced before it is in general use. In short, the American crowd is accustomed to a rate and variety of change that would have bewildered our ancestors, for whom life was much the same from the cradle to the grave. This speeding-up, however, while it means a vastly greater sum of energy—a more lively and unresting spectacle of civilization—does not require more, but rather less, energy from the individual. He does more things and does them more swiftly but he does them more easily. Here, perhaps, is the reason for this ready acceptance of such changes: they have all been obviously in the direction of making life easier, more comfortable, more interesting. From curiosity alone, they have been appealing; and from convenience, they have been irresistible.

Of intellectual changes, the same cannot be said. They require painfully new adjustments. They demand more,

not less, mental labor. They arouse mental uncertainty, and that is very unpleasant to the average man. It does not so much matter to the crowd whether its ideas are reconcilable with the facts of life or with its own behavior. Consistency and logic are of small concern to the crowd. It is satisfied with an old set of notions for its mental life, whereas it is continually changing the details of its physical life. Paradoxically enough, it alters its actual attitude toward things while retaining its old formulas of theoretical belief. Take, for instance, the old-fashioned theory of "holy matrimony." The crowd lingers mentally (at least in the belief that it loudly professes) half a century behind the times: yet its practice is quite modern: the institution of home and family is assuredly not the same—divorce, birth control, the freedom of the younger generation, the emancipation of women, the effects of modern industrial life have changed this institution remarkably. Yet the old platitudes are still venerated. And the man who, candidly realistic both in thought and action, proposes that these new conditions be recognized by law—that the crowd, so to speak, make open confession of its new attitude—is hooted by this crowd which is so fickle and changeable yet withal so conservative.

The crowd is largely indifferent to religion, which obviously plays very little part in its life. It has lost the old intensity of religious faith and belief in it as a guide to conduct. It is, however, not sympathetic to forthright atheism or utter skepticism. True, it does not care enough about religion to persecute the atheist. The crowd, as a rule, is not actively intolerant about religion—though it is more apt to be intolerant in discussing the subject. The fact remains that, with the meaning (*i. e.*, the accepted meaning) gone out of them, the old religious formulas are vaguely held in respect. There are many queer con-

tradictions in the modern attitude of the crowd toward religion, which will be considered at length in another chapter, but there is not a general, open, bold, definite rejection of religious ideology: the crowd is so conservative that it does not even wish to admit that it has changed.

The sentiment of the crowd, openly expressed, is always some years behind the actual changes in its life. In a word, the crowd is not willing to accept a new idea as readily as it accepts a new invention, or a new amusement, or a new detail in its manner of life. In the realm of political and social ideas, this conservatism of the crowd is seen at its worst. It still talks in terms of old-fashioned democracy, in terms of political simplicity, although the complicated jigsaw puzzle of representative centralized government has played the devil with the traditional formulas. It has but a hazy idea of the effects of powerful, concentrated industry upon politics. It uses the language of antiquated economic individualism when modern industry has effectually destroyed the realities of that individualism. It submits to changes of technique, but resists changes of principle in industry: and, even so, in social life practice runs ahead of theory. The future historian could not have an accurate idea of how the American crowd lived today merely by reading a list of their beliefs. He could do so less accurately concerning this than any previous age, for the reason that today the rate of change in actual life is so much greater while the tempo of thought has not correspondingly increased. The only way in which thought, so to speak, has been speeded up is in the number of events, objects, and activities that the crowd is able to take a lively interest in.

3. WHAT IS CROWD PSYCHOLOGY?

It has been said that "crowd psychology" is an illusion: others have doubtless ascribed overmuch to its workings. However meticulous analysis may define it, the reality of it is not in doubt to anyone who has observed crowds. Say that the actions of a crowd are often such as no individual in the crowd, acting alone, would be capable of: that expresses the truth broadly. We may agree on the whole that the crowd has no mysterious psychology of which the traces and possibilities cannot be found in its members. We cannot go the full length of regarding it as an entity. That is like speaking of Government, the State, the Church, etc., as if these were something disembodied and impersonal; although we know very well that they are composed of the characters and wills of individual men, and that, in the last analysis, their meaning is personal.

What is important to remember is that men are affected by their relations with other men. Certain powers, relationships, group or crowd influences alter a man's emotions, or actuate his feelings in a different way than would be true if he were behaving singly. Before there was ever the talk of "crowd psychology," there was a well-known simpler term, "the herd instinct." A crowd (or the herd) becomes panicky where a single person would behave coolly. Passion sweeps through the crowd, leading it to acts both grand and terrible—such passion as the man alone would not display. We know that one of the most regrettable things in human behavior is the facility, and the treachery too (themselves deceived), with which men are ruled by their emotions. We are still working with difficulty toward the sane ideal of following reason as a guide—not suppressing the emotions, culti-

vating indeed far finer feelings, but keeping them fairly and humanely under the sway of reason.

Well, the chief fact about the psychology of a crowd is that it is predominantly emotional. The emotions are heightened and rendered dangerous, unpredictable, unreasonable to the last degree. One man, although he shares the common emotional weaknesses of his kind, permits reason to have some role in his life. He can be reasoned with—the crowd seldom or never. Let us admit that the American crowd is composed of individuals having average good sense and good will; men who are not ordinarily violent; who are not commonly crazy; who, if they are not exemplars of reason, are not madmen of emotionalism. Yet that crowd will act violently and crazily, when its prejudices are aroused—or even when it is worked to the pitch of feeling temporarily an intensity of prejudice or fear or excitement that, as separate individuals, and in the ordinary course of daily life, it does not feel. The crowd gets wildly excited at a ball game or a prize-fight—calm and even-tempered men and women who in everyday life would not dream of such a demonstration and would be ashamed of it. Yet they are seized by the contagion of the herd. They are at once excited and emboldened by numbers.

What everybody is doing at a certain time becomes, at once, the proper form of behavior. In the theater a crowd is moved deeply by emotions which, as individuals, they seldom feel to any extent. True, we may say those emotions are fundamental in human nature. They are, however, effectively called forth in a crowd. Imagine yourself sitting alone in a theater, witnessing a sentimental or tragic or comic play—can you think of yourself as reacting in the way that you react when seeing the same play in the midst of a crowd?

Some natures are more critical, more calm, than others; they can use their judgment when the crowd around them is surrendering to false emotions; they can retain independence and behave consciously as individuals in the midst of numbers. There are even some who can feel emotionally the effect of a crowd, yet at the same time criticize and refuse to yield to these very emotions which they too feel. When the band plays for war, and the impressive ranks march measuredly by, and the populace wildly cheers—surely that is a stirring spectacle, and a man who is decidedly not in sympathy with all this ardor will, being after all a bundle of susceptible nerves, be thrilled. But if he is the exceptional man, he will not be swept away, he will judge the thing which has produced his thrill and know, as clearly as ever, that it is unworthy. And if the crowd were made up entirely of men with strong minds and characters—or let us say men with firmly rational principles—this thing called “crowd psychology” would not be so evident: or it would not have a treacherous, dangerous character.

We must remember that the crowd is composed of average men. They are men who have been trained on false principles, although they do not usually carry those principles to a preposterous or violent extreme. They are men who subsist chiefly on emotions, although they do sometimes use reason in their individual conduct. They are men of weak individuality, although they sometimes show independence of judgment when acting alone. They are, in short, the kind of men who are easily swayed by the beating of drums, by mob orators, and by the passionate excitement of a crowd.

A short time before America entered the World War, most members of the American crowd believed that we should keep out of that war. Only a few months before

Wilson had been re-elected President chiefly on the slogan: "He kept us out of war." Even individuals who thought we should enter the war could be talked with reasonably—before the grand explosion of patriotic fireworks. Yet recall how quickly "crowd psychology" swept the country, and the American crowd, to put it plainly, went crazy. No doubt the war gave opportunity for a lot of cruelty and malice by individuals who, in ordinary times, felt the wish to display such feelings but were restrained to some extent by their normal surroundings. It is true, however, that the crowd as a whole was carried far out of its normal self. Men who in usual, personal relations were kind became positively cruel under the sway of the herd impulse; men who, uninfluenced by crowd psychology, were reasonable and moderate went crazy along with their fellows.

A religious revival is an example of crowd psychology—at once a striking and a poor instance, for while it is idiotically spectacular it affects people who are weak-minded and nervously unbalanced anyway: for the most part it affects this class, yet it has been known to make normally sane and level-headed men (who of course have had religion drilled into them and have never really got away from it) act in a fashion ridiculous to behold.

Men turn themselves loose, as the saying picturesquely has it, in a crowd; they are more emotional and less reasonable in a crowd; and they are bolder in a crowd. Concerning this latter point, there is a graphic illustration in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, when the old Colonel defiantly and contemptuously addresses the mob in front of his house. He tells them that they are a gang of miserable cowards led by one naturally bold man; that without this leader, and without the emotional excitement and protection of being in a crowd, they would

never dare such a threatening movement. Fortunately under this truth-lashing the mob disperses—but nine times out of ten they do their worst.

So we must view this American crowd from all angles. Today it is busily, practically at work in unison. Tomorrow it is a gay crowd, seeking innocently its pleasure. Again it is a crowd moved to harmless though perhaps foolish enthusiasm at a ball game or a political meeting. Now it is a crowd moved to sympathy and heroism in a great accident (though we must qualify that by saying that only a few in the crowd display such qualities). Finally, it is a crowd that is always capable of going mad from the most irrational and perilous emotions. Thus the American crowd is not one, but many.

4. PHASES OF THE CROWD

Not one crowd, but many—yet let us consider it for the moment as one (which is not entirely wrong, for many members of this crowd do follow it in its varying directions) and observe some of its phases. It is very temperamental, we might say, although the individuals composing it may often be of a steady and even stolid nature. It can be changed almost instantly from laughter to howls, from good nature to menace, or from merriment to solemnity.

This crowd may shout itself hoarse at a World's Series game, and at a political meeting wax important and enthusiastic about its democratic share in settling the weighty affairs of the nation, and in church take on a semblance of solemn piety, all within a few hours.

This crowd may roar ominously for the blood of foreign rebels and heretics, like Sacco and Vanzetti, and a few days later become sentimental over the fate of a spectacular murderess.

It will be impressed by the insane, ignoble antics of a Billy Sunday and behave rather less idiotically over the death of a Valentino and display a better enthusiasm of hero worship over the exploits of a Lindbergh.

You may say that this crowd is bloodthirsty when it calls for harder fighting at a pugilistic match; but on the other hand its instincts of humanity are instantly felt when it witnesses a sudden accident in the street.

This crowd may (such are its contradictions) be simultaneously affected by the empty eloquence of a Bryan and, regardless of its beliefs (or perhaps because of a sneaking realization of the unadmitted truth), yield to the admirably lucid and sane wit of a Darrow.

It will show extreme panic in a fire, yet it can be trained to fight desperately and heroically in battle.

It will allow itself to be deluded by the high-flown idealistic fallacies of a Wilson, talk glibly about democracy and civilization and peace as if they really were the objects of the war (carried away characteristically by emotion and unable to reason well); then it repudiates Wilson and all his words by the election of Harding, the apostle of "normalcy."

Foreigners are frequently confused in their estimate of the American crowd. Those who are critical, accuse it of being materialistic—and it is. Those who are friendly say that it is idealistic—and it is that too, which means that it is at times much affected by idealistic slogans, which, however, generally turn out to serve quite material ends.

The American crowd is never quite the same, except that, for all its showy character, it is at bottom commonplace. Like the movies, there is the grand spectacle with commonplace motive and indifference to art. The crowd is not interested in the perplexities and profundities of

thought; nor in the lofty beauties of art; nor in the subtle or great qualities of literature; nor in those problems of character which escape the casual eye. It is, after all, busy in living on the surface—but living very actively, with appealing gusto, and with a hustling, boastful naiveté.

5. ARE WE BORED?

It is sometimes alleged that the hurry and restlessness of the American crowd (or of the modern crowd in any industrial country) is due to boredom from the monotonous machine kind of labor. And Bertrand Russell suggests that the extraordinary excitement of the crowd in modern wartime is due to the necessity of finding relief from this boredom. We may see somewhat of a contradiction here: for if the crowd enjoys itself in such a variety of ways during its leisure hours, may that not be regarded as compensating for the boredom of its working hours? If the old hand worker took a delight in his personally, carefully done work which the machine worker is denied, it is equally true that the former had, aside from his work, much narrower opportunities of enjoying life. Looking at life as a whole, we should more readily believe that the workers in olden times must have suffered from boredom rather than the modern worker who lives in a world which may indeed be described as a continually exciting show, and who has, moreover, the spectacle of all the world transmitted in words and pictures for his entertainment.

As for the difference between the attitude of the crowd in wartime today and its attitude in the past, that can be explained more obviously than by the boredom of machine work. Simply, today war is conducted on a gigantic scale which involves whole nations. Whereas in an earlier day, most of the nation did not feel itself directly

and daily concerned in war. The effect and the emotions of war were naturally not so widespread—those who stayed at home lived in an atmosphere of peace. Again, we have today enormous agencies of information and propaganda, which make it impossible for anyone to be indifferent to war. The English countryman, of whom Russell speaks, in the Napoleonic wars received scanty and delayed news—whereas, during the World War everybody was through the newspapers a constant spectator and a participant in the emotions of the struggle.

With regard to boredom it does not seem that this age is worse than any other—but on the contrary the overwhelming evidence is that we have a more interesting life. Again, the monotonous character of machine labor is exaggerated. A great deal of it requires skill and is done with a creative feeling. The automobile mechanic may not get much thrill out of attending to one small part of making a car; but the mechanic whose job is to repair cars certainly has the thrill and pride of workmanship. A linotype worker enjoys the skill in setting type, although he does the work on a machine. The difference is mainly between the skilled and unskilled worker. Work that requires skill is not boring, and work that does not require skill is inevitably the contrary. It is a fact, too, that men come to feel themselves a part of the machine—they identify themselves with it more or less emotionally—so that even though its manipulation is very simple it does not lack interest entirely. It is on the whole simple enough to drive an automobile, yet the mere fact of driving it is fascinating.

Yet acknowledging that mechanical labor involves a vast deal of monotony—that the conditions of modern industry are conducive to boredom—we cannot agree that modern life, regarded as a whole, is therefore singularly

monotonous. It is only so as all life may be said to be—once we are familiar with a certain kind of life, however varied and interesting, it becomes tiresome at times; and it is hard to see how men can be entirely relieved from boredom in any society, unless indeed that will be one of the blessings of the millennium—and then perhaps we shall wish for a little boredom by way of contrast.

The American crowd may be in a hurry and it may be excited by the speed, the noise, the glitter, the endlessly diverse appeals and interests of modern life: the stolid serfs of the Middle Ages, under the same conditions, would react in exactly the same way. But the American crowd is not bored: those who are bored are those who are out of the crowd, away from the rush and glitter of things.

CHAPTER VIII

The Melting Pot Has Not Brought That Intelligent Exchange of Culture Which Some Idealists Hoped For

1. ONCE AN IDEAL

IT was Israel Zangwill who described America as "the melting pot." It was an apt term, representing a real situation that Americans in the past century viewed with pride rather than alarm. It was flattering to think of America as the great land of opportunity, the refuge of the oppressed, the vast crucible of hope and progress from which all the races of mankind would emerge purer and better—out of which a greater race would come. Perhaps the last statement is not quite accurate. There is no evidence that Americans thought a superior race possible; the Americans (meaning those of English or colonial descent) were the flower of civilization and divine selection. It was the picture of the republic as the world-acknowledged haven of freedom and opportunity that, in a vague way, seemed fine.

The country was still, at the close of the century, largely unsettled. Modern industry, with its hordes of foreign labor and intense competition among the workers, was just beginning. There was room for all. There was a national tradition of friendliness toward the oppressed and revolutionary in all countries. During the century a great many exiles from Europe—revolutionaries who had fled from the failure of their struggle for

liberty—had come here, had been welcomed, had made good citizens, and had notably helped to save the Union in the Civil War. The gallant Kossuth, seeking here a more healthful air than in his native Hungary, had been a figure appealing to the imagination.

Of course, revolution was a word and a fact of limited meaning to the American mind in the nineteenth century. It meant political revolution, a righteous protest against the “effete monarchies” of Europe—in short, it meant a quite praiseworthy desire to enjoy an American form of government. Defeated in that desire at home, what more natural than that European patriots should wish to become American patriots? It was the age of innocence—or, if you will, of idealism—in America’s attitude toward foreign problems and peoples. For those problems did not closely concern the republic. It was easy to be broad-minded and liberal and, as I say, a matter of pride and self-flattery: which explanation does not detract from the inherent excellence of that feeling: only, we naturally try to account for a state of mind, and in doing so we look at the social conditions. Broadly speaking, America was the land of freedom and the rest of the world was under the heel of tyranny—that was the American view and it was, with few exceptions, correct enough. Immigration was in the premises an act of patriotic allegiance to the republic.

The reason sometimes given for the favorable attitude toward “the melting pot” ideal—namely, that in the past century immigration was of a Nordic character easily assimilable into American life, whereas in late years there has been an immigration of Latin and Slav races who are not adaptable to our free institutions (or who are of inferior racial stock)—is, in the first place, going too far for a reason when the obvious one lies

close at hand. And, again, it is based upon an unscientific notion of racial purity and superiority. The Nordic bunk—the whole idea of a sharp, arbitrary distinction among races, which has been confusedly and inaccurately made—has been shown to be without scientific support. And the idea of classifying characteristics, saying that this is French, that is Italian, something else is German, and still other traits are Anglo-Saxon, is bunk of the first—or the worst—order. There is nothing to show that Americans would naturally be more antipathetic toward Italians and Poles than toward Germans or Swedes, nor that there is any difference in their possibility of Americanization (whatever that doubtful term may signify).

The reason for the earlier attitude toward immigration—and the reason for the present changed attitude—is quite simply economic. That is the basic reason, although its emotionalized aspects are more sinister. The fact is that when “the melting pot” bubbled a quarter of a century ago, it was not so full. Modern industry has brought a greater competition of labor—a growing propaganda against foreigners, of which the Nordic fallacy is an example—an intensification of jealousies and prejudices that are latent in any attitude of national or racial superiority and that require only the sharpening of an economic motive or of patriotic propaganda. America cannot be called a crowded country today—far from it. Yet the increase of the foreign population (not any change in the character of that population)—together with the increase in the population of the country as a whole and the enormously developed industrialization of the country—has transformed “the melting pot” into a symbol of suspicion and menace.

And foreigners are now loosely grouped in the popular mind as the arch-fomenters of *industrial revolution*,

which includes America, rather than as the patriots of *political revolution* confined to Europe and highly complimentary to America.

We have, finally, become more involved in the conflict of world affairs and the more lively national distrusts which accompany this conflict. It may be said that formerly Americans felt an antipathy toward foreign *governments*, while now they are (potentially when not actively) hostile—or more hostile than in the past—toward foreign *peoples* as well as governments.

2. THE CONFLICT TODAY

Nothing so extreme will be assumed as that American civilization is definitely arrayed against citizens of alien birth and that the latter stand in the relation of outsiders to our civilization. The naturalized citizen has politically and legally the same rights as the native (whether he is always treated with equal rights is another question); and we may even say that usually in practice there is no denial of rights on the ground that a person was not born in this country. Discrimination is apt to be more subtle than that. Yet there is a conflict. That is to say, there is a prejudice against foreigners—especially if they are plainly alien in appearance and habit—which works to the disadvantage of the latter. The melting pot has not melted these different elements and made them one. Nor has there been that harmonious and intelligent exchange of cultures—that diversity in equality—which some idealists have hoped for.

It is safe to assert that the average American gets nothing from foreigners (a term which I shall here use for the sake of distinction and not invidiously) but an unpleasant feeling of strangeness. He cares little about their viewpoint, their traditions, their customs. He does

not think that the American way of life can be at all improved by comparisons. He believes simply that what he calls "Americanism" should be imposed upon the foreigner, while at the same time he is not quite willing to consider the latter an American. Even when he is on friendly terms with some individual foreigners, he thinks of them as a whole with a certain contempt, hostility and, of course, misunderstanding. I have said that Americans have a loose notion that foreigners are radicals, as if this were peculiar to the latter. Usually they are thought of as anarchists—a term which calls to the American mind visions of bomb-throwing and every sort of menace. (Undoubtedly the fact that Sacco and Vanzetti were foreigners was a fatal element in their tragedy. They were slackers, anarchists [*not* bomb-throwers] and—to make these two sins doubly bad and adding a third sin—they were "dagoes." The monstrously exaggerated notion was current that to spare their lives would be to let foreigners "run over" Americans and their institutions. No recent instance in our history has so terribly and clearly shown the native hostility to persons who had not the good fortune to have been born in these States.)

As a matter of fact, American workers are just as likely to be radical, both industrially and politically. One significant step in the Americanization of certain immigrants has been to teach them the lesson of labor solidarity: a lesson, to be sure, which has not been taught as part of the conventional gospel of Americanism, but that has been inculcated partly by hard circumstances and partly by trade-union propaganda. In the past, strikes have been broken by the introduction of foreign workingmen ignorant of American conditions. After a number of years these workers have in turn rebelled—that is

to say, they have learned the facts of American industry and the viewpoint of American workers. On many such occasions, strikes of radical native workers have been smashed by the employment of conservative (or rather inexperienced and helpless) alien workers.

If the worker from abroad comes here as a radical and becomes more radical, or if he comes as a conservative and turns into a radical, where lies the fault? Possibly he is misled. Even so, something has gone wrong with the process of Americanization. He must have found a lack of sympathy or opportunity. As a rule, he is far more eager to understand America and adapt himself to our ways than we are to cultivate friendliness with him. A stranger in a strange land—what situation calls for a more sympathetic attitude? Imagine yourself in the place of such a stranger; but this is precisely what the average man is incapable of doing. He cannot surmount his prejudice and perceive appreciatively another's point of view. When Americans who speak the same language and have the same traditions are often so widely separated in viewpoint, and look upon each other as strangers almost, what must be the barrier between the American and the foreigner—although, for that matter, the two latter may be substantially in agreement concerning the "eternal verities" of Home, Heaven, and Hokum.

One complaint that is made against foreigners, in the name of that holy of holies (obscure and undefined), Americanization, is their tendency to live in groups, where they retain their own language, their own customs, and form picturesque sections where the American can travel abroad at home. This is thought to be inimical, at any rate a scandalous state of affairs, when it is really very interesting—and very natural. If they refused absolutely to learn the American language and conform to

American laws and the essentials of American social order, such an objection might be well urged. But they make no such refusal, which would obviously be to their disadvantage. Americanization, at least within limits, is necessary to their success and welfare. What happens is that they cling fondly to certain customs among themselves, and have the pleasure of keeping alive their own language, while at the same time conducting themselves among Americans in a sufficiently adept and comprehensible American fashion. It is indeed a commonplace that the second generation of aliens are about as thoroughly American as if they had come over in the Mayflower. In the first place, as I say, the foreigner—even of the first generation—is inspired by curiosity and ambition. And then the terms of American life are brisk, incisive, and demanding, not easily to be escaped. Americanization, of an actual, not an academic kind, is a very speedy process. To keep step one must, whether native or alien, move lively.

Let us, for another illustration, take one class that is looked upon to a great extent (certainly in an unfair degree) with suspicion and criticism and envy, even when its members have been for a number of generations in this country and are—as they mostly and decidedly are—American in speech, briskness, ease and thorough adaptability. I refer to the Jewish people. No valid charge of aloofness to American life can be made against the Jews. Even where they retain familiar customs of their race and use intimately their own language, they are as American as any native son. So far as Americanization is concerned, their racial intimacy means no more than for a group of Methodists to live together in a certain neighborhood and share their common tastes, or for a group of Iowans to assert their state nativity by special

association in Los Angeles (where all good—or successful—Iowans go). What charge can hold against the Jew—save that he is a Jew? We see here nothing more nor less than a ridiculous, indefensible prejudice. It can scarcely be explained on any better ground than that of not liking what is different. And indeed conformity for its own sake is singularly prominent in the American gospel. Jews, of course, do not suffer on the whole actual disabilities in America. One might say that they are too American for that: *i. e.*, too enterprising and independent and entirely able to take care of themselves. (But we are, unscientifically, ascribing enterprise as an American trait and we have already warned against this facile tendency of over-simplification.)

Here, perhaps, we may find one cause, at least a subsidiary and encouraging cause, for the American antipathy toward not only Jews but many foreigners. One sometimes suspects that the sore point is not too little but too much Americanization. Notably Jews, Greeks and Italians have shown too well their fitness for the great American game of making money. It is naturally shocking to the pride of an American holding a clerk's job to behold a Greek flourishing (most unnaturally, I suppose) in the restaurant business. Prosperous Italians—who are unpatriotically able to speak with fluency both Italian and English and can deal successfully both with their own people and the native population—are an eyesore to Americans who with all the advantages of Baptist and Nordic ancestry can speak only one language and have not prospered overmuch. The Jew who makes money and spends it with equal ease is perhaps envied for that as much as for his not having ancestors who were little better than barbarians in the Middle Ages; or for not being descended from such pure, native stock as

a short time ago made the Bible the supreme educational criterion in the state of Tennessee. Seriously, this is held as a special reason for disliking people of other races. Or at any rate it lends a very sharp edge to the bottom dislike and distrust of "strangers." Bring up the subject of races with the average American and nine times out of ten you will be edified by the remark: "Those Greeks are running away with the business, so that it don't seem to be a *white man's* country any more." Or those Jews. Or those Eyetalians.

As in trade, so in labor. The American workingman has of late years been loud in his denunciation of foreigners who took away the jobs of honest patriotic native workers (and who were given those jobs by honest, patriotic American employers). Immigration restrictions have diminished the bitter cry. Yet the prejudice, economic and social and the product also of narrow teaching, still mars the American attitude toward foreigners. To the extent that Americanization has failed, to the extent that races in America do not dwell in perfect harmony or understanding with each other, the principal blame must be laid at the door of Americans. For the prejudice, the refusal to harmonize, the narrow pride and pretense of superiority are all on the side of Americans. Foreigners do not display such an attitude.

But I revert to the fact that the earlier immigrants (for, after all, the history of America is a succession of tides of immigration) found a country which had plenty of room for them—was indeed glad of their help in settling and building up a vast continental empire—and that those immigrants had securely placed themselves before the country had reached a mature if not a full development. Later immigrants have not been so fortunate. They find a new economic situation, which throws

them for the most part directly into the ranks of common labor, and this fact bears a large share of the explanation for the contemptuous, hostile attitude toward them. It is merely dodging the issue to talk about Nordics, Slavs and Latins. Nationality or race does not cut a really important figure. Had the situation been reversed and the Slavs and Latins pre-empted the earlier opportunity and power of the new country, and were the Nordics the late and less fortunate comers, the cry would be that the Nordics were inferior and menacing.

The thing is fairly simple (or unfairly): Powerful classes are always "superior." Powerless—or less powerful—classes are always "inferior." The anti-foreign psychology in America has no better basis than this fact of economic precedence and power: this it is at least which dominates the situation. True, many descendants of the earlier immigrants belong to the working class; many belong to the middle class, which has not individually great power but collectively is a forceful element of the nation's life; nevertheless, the older "Americans"—for all have been transplanted within the past few centuries from other lands—have a feeling of superiority, even of power, although they "own" nothing but their jobs. Yet the quality of the despised immigrants from southern Europe is revealed by the extent to which they "get ahead" and establish themselves successfully in this more crowded, competitive America under far greater handicaps (socially and economically) than the earlier immigrants. The first comers had indeed the hard labor of the pioneers. But they had obviously a measure of economic equality, direct opportunity, and freedom that the immigrant does not have who takes his lowly place in the terrific "melting pot" of today. The settlers of the country (all immigrants, mind you) found a chance waiting for

them. All they needed (not that it was a small requirement) was the pluck to take it and persistence to stay with it. Today the immigrant must, as it were, make his chance. And often when he succeeds under the greatest difficulties—that is to say, when he becomes Americanized—he discovers that he is worse hated and feared.

3. THE NEGRO

When one mentions the Negro, one mentions a bitter and stubborn problem of the first order in American life. It does not seem to be possible for the average man to discuss this question calmly and justly. Nowhere is the force of unreasoning emotionalism more terribly, and at the same time (for the two *can* go together) ridiculously asserted. A black skin—this is the damnation of the Negro, so far as the allegedly superior white race is concerned. I say “allegedly” superior. By this I mean that there is not a particle of scientific evidence to demonstrate the inherent, racial, biological inferiority of the Negro. His color is not a defect or a degradation excepting as the white man has made it—or declared it—so.

Socially and economically, of course, the colored race in America is kept by systematic oppression, both open and subtle, in an inferior position where it was helplessly placed early in American history. Culturally, too, the colored race in America is inferior in achievement—though not in *rate* of achievement since its emancipation from chattel slavery. But obviously this cultural backwardness is explained by lack of opportunity. Are the pure white American yokels of the isolated hills of Tennessee culturally ahead of the Negro? Circumstances have kept the former also from the heritage of civilization. The white man's economic superiority (for the word “economic” really covers it all) is, then, a positive and

overwhelming fact. And this theory of the natural inferiority of the Negro is simply a rationalization of his own interests as a ruling and proudly lording master over the Negro: master still in the essentials—and certainly in his own estimation and attitude—although not master in the blunt, absolute sense of chattel slavery.

Although the fact of color is always emphasized in condemning the Negro, the white man does not say that color *per se* is what is wrong with the black man (or brown or yellow or virtually white). He would deny that there is any persecution or discrimination primarily and merely on account of color. Here, too, he rationalizes and claims that color is not perhaps the cause but the sign of inferiority. In other words, it is asserted that the black man as a human organism is not so good as the white man as a human organism: that the former is by nature in a lower place: that he is made out of poorer material, "spiritual" if not physical.

This is a wonderful example of how a prejudice can maintain itself confidently regardless of facts. As a matter of fact and logic, one wonders just how far this idea of the Negro's lower nature can be carried. In slavery days in the South, this idea might have been more plausibly defended, for the Negro was absolutely crushed by the system under which he was only a beast of burden. He had no chance to prove whether or not he was capable of development. Since the emancipation, in spite of all the handicaps under which he has perforce labored, the colored man has made large and conspicuous dents in the old theory of his brutish lowliness. It has been proved plainly and encouragingly that the Negro can be educated, quite the same as the white man. Apparently his brain is not different from that of the white man. He is not only capable of simple education, but he is capable

of the higher reaches of emotional and intellectual development.

There are a great many very cultured Negroes in the United States today. They have demonstrated that in learning and development their race can go as far as the white race. When one thinks of such highly cultivated and able persons—some of them indeed with talents of a high and original kind—as James Weldon Johnson, W. E. B. Dubois, Claude McKay, Paul Robeson, Charles Gilpin, Walter White, one wonders in what this natural inferiority of the Negro consists. If these men were biologically of an inferior type, it is obvious that they could not have attained such a level of culture. To say that the majority of Negroes are not the equals of these exceptional men is just as pertinent to the question as to say (what is equally true) that neither are the majority of white men up to these standards. If these Negroes have been able to develop as they have, it follows that being a Negro is not a natural bar to the best in life. What one Negro can do, other Negroes (modified by the differences between individuals, differences that apply to white people also) can do. Thus the idea of racial unfitness simply will not bear analysis. If the colored man had proved ineducable, if it had been proved that he could not do what the white man could do, if it had been proved that he could not advance beyond a certain lower standard of social life and culture and ability—then the dogma of inferiority might have some impressive ground: it would indeed be undeniable. Yet this, which is the main point to be considered, is exactly what has not been shown. By his own efforts, and even with less opportunity than the white man, the Negro has given the most convincing refutation of the rationalized theory of white superiority.

Why, then, is there such a bitter and unyielding prej-

udice against the Negro—originally and particularly and, it seems, incorrigibly in the South? It cannot be altogether explained on the ground of the difference in color. There is no reason to believe that it is just naturally impossible for a white and a black man to live together in friendliness and equality. There is no law of nature that when a white man sees a black man he inevitably has a feeling of hostility or repulsion. In our own country such a view is invalidated by the number of intelligent, unprejudiced whites who have a feeling of simple humanity toward the colored race. Why, for example, does a man like Clarence Darrow treat a Negro as a human being, not as a lower object to be condemned or feared? Simply because Clarence Darrow is an intelligent man—and further because he does not fear to meet the Negro, socially and economically, on equal ground. Why does the ordinary man feel as he does about the colored man? First and last, it is because he is not, on this question at least, intelligent; also he has been raised in a social atmosphere that involved this attitude toward the colored race, and he has not had enough individuality to get away from this atmosphere and take a clear view. And often it is because he resents the Negro as a direct competitor with him for his job, and he is grateful for the chance to employ prejudice as a weapon in the economic struggle.

The fact that color is not a hard-and-fast line naturally and psychologically separating white and black is again proved by the attitude toward the colored race in other lands. In Europe there is no such stigma placed upon a black skin as we have in this country. American soldiers who served in France were surprised to observe the simple, natural way in which Negroes were regarded there. And it might have taught them a lesson, had they not been so steeped in prejudice—a prejudice that, while

it is most severe in the South, is really national, varying in intensity according to the denseness of the Negro population and hence their competition with the white race. A black skin, then, is not the fundamental cause of the white man's antipathy toward the Negro. But no other reason can convincingly be assigned for believing in Negro inferiority. It is the only marked sign of difference between white man and black. Other charges against the colored race fall to the ground. They have no support scientifically nor have they any support in the facts visibly before our eyes, day after day.

The reason for the artificially enforced inferiority of the Negro is, as I have said, social and economic. It is peculiarly aggravated in America because of the enslaved beginning of the Negro here, and the consequent tradition built upon slavery. Until little more than half a century ago, the Negro was a slave; and as a free man we cannot grow used to him, that is to say, accept him as quite as good as ourselves. In a psychological sense it is the old story of "give a dog a bad name." It is like having been in prison—respectability never forgets that stigma. The viewpoint of slavery still influences the white man's behavior toward the Negro. Politically the latter is free (in the North) and socially-economically he has obtained a considerable measure of freedom, but the white man still insists that he should "keep his place"—which is arbitrarily asserted to be lower than that of the white man and which, without any honest argument as to the merits of the case, the white man insists upon making a fact. In his sociological past (in America) we perceive the roots of the present American attitude toward the Negro. Even in the North, in localities where feeling about the colored race is not intense, the essential Southern attitude—in a word, the viewpoint engendered and intensified by slav-

ery—is accepted. As a country we have never been able to look at the question rationally. Historic, sociological and psychological factors have obscured our reasoning on this question. The past hangs darkly over the Negro. He is growing away from that past. But we are putting many grievous obstacles in his way.

In the South today, the race question is more intense because, in the first place, that section of the country is more powerfully under the influence of the inherited psychology of slavery days; and, what is more important, because the colored race is more numerous in the South and is therefore a more important economic factor. The white race below the Mason-Dixon line has always depended upon the Negro to do “the dirty work” (the Negro and his economic equal but supposedly racial superior, the poor white peasant and yokel). Their system is based upon the enslavement, practically speaking, of the Negro. And they naturally fear any opportunity of progress and economic freedom for this useful lower class. It will readily be recalled what alarm was expressed in the South when the Negro migration northward was so great just following the World War. That alarm—and the legislation passed to prevent the “luring” of colored workers away from the South—was very illuminating indeed of the superior white’s point of view. The latter professes to despise and fear the Negro—but he wants the latter to stay in the South! Evidently a pure white South would be most undesirable. The economic motive, which makes mock of all the false psychology and anthropology expended in bolstering up the case against the Negro, is plainly to be seen.

To be sure, Southern whites profess to fear that, if he were given any great measure of real freedom, the Negro would arise terribly, burn the homes of the white

men, violate their women, and make an Indian massacre look like a very tame affair. They may have said this so long that they have come to believe it—a familiar process in psychology. Yet perhaps in the privacy of their own communings they recognize clearly enough why they are against real freedom for the Negro. They cannot be blind to their own interests. If what they say about the Negro were true, even so their logic in wanting to keep him oppressed and ignorant would be sadly at fault. For it is that very condition which, if anything, would make the Negro really a menace. It is well known that education, whether of the Negro or any other class, makes for social safety. The more liberty and progress the Negro enjoys, the better member of society he will be—and this has been proved in the North where the Negro, decidedly freer (though not ideally free) than in the South, and with greater opportunities, is comparable in citizenship with whites of similar social standing.

Indeed the difference in the attitude of the North toward the race question bears out the explanation given of the Southern attitude. The North never enslaved the Negro, therefore it has not been so bitterly dominated by the psychology of such a system. And the Negro has not been numerously competitive with white men in the North, therefore again a more tolerant attitude has been possible. When the Negro has come most sharply into competition with the white Northerner, trouble has followed. But then it is a poor excuse, ethically at least, to oppress a man or race or group because it competes with you. If you are fair and humane, and again if you are willing courageously to take equal chances, you will let freedom rule. It is of course absurd and unjust in the extreme to persecute the black man because of the color of his skin; but it is quite as unjust—and quite as inde-

fensible from any but the most callous point of view—to persecute and oppress him because he may win a better job, a better education, a better place in life.

Arguments on the Negro question invariably reduce themselves to absurdities. Logic is completely confused by prejudice. It is said that nature is against social equality between black and white. Then why fear such equality? If that argument is true, such equality can be no more than a bit of theoretical folly preached by blind men. It is argued, on the one hand, that no man would want a Negro man to marry his sister, and on the other hand it is apparently assumed that if social equality were admitted in so many words our sisters would all flock to the altar with Negroes. It is declared that the Negro is naturally inferior—yet every means is taken to force him to stay in a position of inferiority, which would indicate a doubt as to whether he would naturally stay there if given a different chance.

And with such chances as he has, the Negro is remarkably advancing in his social and cultural life. He is showing his economic ability. Negroes learn the trades, the professions, and the more subtle branches of culture as readily as white men. One is strongly inclined to think that in time the race question will be solved by amalgamation: a process that has been markedly encouraged, in deeds if not in words, and more in the South than elsewhere. Meanwhile here is a bitter prejudice that mars American life, in the face of which, however, the Negro steadily forges ahead and even has the courage (or the temerity!) openly to demand and defend his rights.

We have come a long way from the ideal of "the melting pot." Our treatment of aliens and Negroes has been most shameful; and in spite of all attempts to rationalize this treatment, it has plainly been prompted by

the most selfish, even cruel passions and interests. Yet these problems must be solved, and solved fairly, if humane progress is to be possible in America. Even from the standpoint of "enlightened selfishness," it is dangerous to practice oppression. It means tragedy—it has already meant tragedy. We can never say that we are civilized until we drop all these foolish and harmful and cruel prejudices and respect the differences of men, learning to live together in freedom and understanding.

CHAPTER IX

Democracy in America Is Not Perfect, but There Is No Alternative That Would Safeguard Human Rights

1. THE “SOVEREIGN” VOTER

IN America, our idealistic fellow countrymen used to say, the citizen is sovereign. That phrase, accurately interpreted, would have meant of course the ideal of anarchism: each man a law unto himself, not ruthlessly but nobly so. A symbolic or composite citizen was in mind and he—the Average Man—was glorified as the ruler of the Republic. The situation was and still is far less clear and perfect than those enthusiasts seemed to believe, for the dispute still goes on as to how far actually the people rule. Cynics are not wanting who declare that democracy is a delusion and a farce: that it is little more than a change in name and forms, and that the few rule in the long run as effectually as they could wish. Sober students and scholars, critically examining our institutions, find democracy in its actual workings is a long way from what it is ideally supposed or desired to be. There are others who retain the old enthusiasm and insist that in our Republic the popular will is really effective. Where there is so much disagreement, we may expect to observe in fact contradictory phases of this government of ours, discovering spots on its purity and indeed broad streaks of imperfection.

Technically speaking, our government is not a democracy: *i. e.*, the people do not come together for direct

debate and decision and in such genuinely democratic assemblages make our laws. That would plainly be impossible in such a large country. What we have is a system of representative government, which functions through what is called party government. The laws are not made by the people, although the people are supposed to indicate by their votes what policies of legislation they favor. For the sake of simplicity, however, and as the broad meaning of the term is generally understood, I shall identify our government, politics and laws as "democracy." Nor do I mean by this term that, even under representative government—that even indirectly—"democracy" is synonymous with popular rule. In a word, let us admit the possibility that democracy may be undemocratic. It may deliberately ignore, distort or defy the will of the voters. It may include class legislation opposed to the interests of the majority. It may reveal usurpations of power by individuals. It may appear so complicated that nobody can say what the people desire—least of all the people themselves. These are indeed well-known features of democracy as it functions practically in the Republic.

One thing, obviously, that makes democracy difficult is the vast complexity of modern government. It may as well be recognized at the start that a complete and ideal popular rule is impossible, for there can be no popular knowledge of government such as that rule would have to ground itself upon thoroughly. Most politicians have little better knowledge of the processes of government than do their constituents. Politicians, indeed, are more versed in the art (or trickery) of campaigning and political intrigue than in statesmanship. A few specialists understand this or that department of the government—and these, being biased by special interests, readily disagree. We have as a result a condition which is encourag-

ing to irresponsible politics on the one hand, and which further creates inevitably a huge and intricate bureaucracy beyond the grasp of the mass of ordinary voters.

There is certainly nothing democratic about the greater part of the business of government that is carried on daily in Washington. This, however, need not defeat the broad essential purpose of popular rule; bureaucracy, insofar as it is merely the expert administration of details—a matter of businesslike, non-political civil service—is necessary (say if you will a “necessary evil”) and is, theoretically at least, consistent with the democratic idea of freedom. The trouble arises when bureaucrats—the men who are charged with the administration of the laws—usurp a legislative authority, at any rate a dictatorial authority, by their interpretation or emphasis upon the laws. It is clear that the people are for the time being powerless when this is done. Unless someone higher in authority chooses to restrain him, any administrative or enforcement officer however petty can in effect make himself a tyrant. This is no fanciful suggestion, a hint of what might happen. We all know that such examples of tyranny under democracy constantly occur.

Again, there is no end to the making of laws. It has been said facetiously, and yet with a great deal of substantial truth, that no man knows when he is violating a law—that most of us, very likely, violate some law every day. We can have only the most general idea of what the law is. And that fact furnishes employment endlessly to the lawyers when we come, one way or another, into conflict with government. We must hire a lawyer to discover what are our rights or obligations; and the lawyers and the judges—not to speak of the juries—disagree. To be sure, we have a Constitution which is sonorously called “the fundamental law of the land” and in which we read,

in sufficiently plain language, that we have certain rights which no law can take away. Yet the Constitution has been so slashed, sandbagged and subtly (or violently) interpreted that no man can be sure of it. Lawyers specialize in its grave interpretation, devoting years to the study of what can and cannot be done under the Constitution. Judges say what the laws and the Constitution mean, and thus set up as legislators themselves. Laws are passed which seem plainly enough to conflict with the Bill of Rights, yet they are ingeniously justified and enforced. Just recently there has been passed in the State of Minnesota a law which provides for the judicial suppression (by injunction) of any publication which "regularly publishes malicious, scandalous and defamatory matter." Under such a law, it appears that honest criticism of public officials and measures may be suppressed. It is a violation of freedom of the press. It is unconstitutional. But what *is* constitutional? One lawyer of my acquaintance cynically remarks: "Whatever the judge says."

The truth is that the founders of the Republic did not mean to let democracy go unchecked. They did not trust the people wholly—nor very much. We know that they devised a system of "checks and balances" whose object was to confuse, delay or defeat the popular will. We have a representative lower house of Congress; an upper house that is—nationally—less representative; an executive with the power of veto and who has been said to be more powerful than any present-day king; cabinet members who are not responsible to Congress or the people; and, finally, judges who can upset the whole works and who are the true autocrats, so to speak, of democracy. We have, then, a machinery of government that is so checked, "balanced," and complicated that sometimes one marvels that anything the people want can ultimately find

expression in the laws. The machine works because somehow it must, but it is cumbersome and contradictory. The "wisdom of the fathers" may be praised as ingenious, but it is certain that it was not democratic. Opponents of democracy regard this complexity as a redeeming feature. They fail to show, however, any loftiness of statesmanship resulting from it. Possibly it makes easier control by certain interests but it does not raise government to a plane of higher intelligence.

These are, from the popular point of view, weaknesses in the framing and working of the democratic principle. Yet the important thing is that in the main issues of policy the people should rule; that their interests and rights should prevail; that they should have generally speaking, in essence and outline and guiding principles, the kind of government they want, leaving the multitude of details for specialists in legislation and administration. Even here, although democracy is more soundly justified, a great deal of uncertainty exists. What we have said of the intricacies of government and the confusing, vague number of laws applies somewhat to principles and policies of a more simple, sweeping nature which the people might be expected better to comprehend. They do have a greater degree of comprehension with regard to principles than details. They know better in a rough-and-ready way what they want. But here too there is confusion, misrepresentation, and a lamentable deficiency of thought and knowledge upon which to base a consideration of principles. Usually real issues are not discussed in political campaigns. Practical politics is largely the art of dodging these issues. There is generally some slogan or picturesque matter of discussion which diverts the popular mind from political reality. It is obvious that the voters, if they do not understand government very well, are greatly

handicapped in dealing even with the broadest issues of a campaign.

There is some reassurance in the fact that between elections there is a more sincere, extensive, and educational discussion of public questions. It is, after all, an advantage of democracy that government is openly conducted, talked about, criticized, and constantly judged. And if the people have not a high degree of political wisdom, they have a working conception of their rights and, if need be, they can defend those rights or assert them positively. Once elected, officials may break their promises, ignore the wishes of the people, and go to considerable lengths of tyranny. There is, however, a sense of public opinion that is never quite lost. That opinion, because it is not united nor intelligent, may safely be flouted over certain periods, and as a rule, we know that politicians play fast and loose with democracy, but there is always the possibility of a political upset. Whether these upsets do the people much good is another question—they seldom accomplish what is expected of them—but they do serve as a reminder that the popular will is not exactly helpless in a democracy.

It is certain that the larger and continued abuses of monarchy, of a tyrannical form of government, are not possible in a democratic society. True, the people may tolerate a great deal of corruption, many abuses, much usurpation of authority; they may display indifference so long as things go well or not too badly; they may be confused and misled on many issues; they may fail to show any considerable idealism or intelligence. It is easy to point out absurdities and injustices under democracy, and they should be pointed out. What remains, after all is said, is that the people are substantially freer and happier than under a dictatorship. A great amount of petty graft

and tyranny and some very important violations of justice are suffered, but no vital, general oppression—no sweeping denial of common rights—is normally conceivable. However clumsily, corruptly and foolishly democracy may work it is, from the standpoint of the average man, favorable in comparison with governments of the past. We cannot nor would we return to a less democratic form of government. We can only improve upon democracy—or, what is more to the point, raise the social and cultural level of American life. The need is not sufficiently expressed in the cliché that “the cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy.” The great need is for education: not simply more education but the right kind of education that will train minds and form character.

What is the alternative to democracy? Despotic rule? The experience of history is that we are more apt to have a bad despot than a good one. Absolute power carries within itself the seeds of inevitable and intolerable abuses. Anyway, freedom in an awkwardly managed society is better to be desired than subservience in a more efficiently managed society. It is more to our advantage, in real human values, that we should be governed by incompetent politicians than by a ruthless Mussolini. Would rule by an aristocracy be more desirable? That is sheer illusion, for aristocratic rule has been just as corrupt as democratic rule and not more statesmanlike in the sense of a high-minded, intelligent concern for the popular welfare. It is a mistake to confuse aristocracy with brains and vision, as certain critics of democracy seem perversely to do. No doubt a higher rating of personal intellect, dignity and brilliancy has been enjoyed, let us say, at certain periods when England was governed by an aristocracy than is commonly to be observed in our democracy. This higher

ability, however, was devoted to ruling for the benefit of the aristocracy. It is not clear that aristocracy in the conduct of government would be a good exchange for democracy in the results of government.

No one can deny the charge that commonplace men are raised to office in our democracy, and that a brilliant man of lofty principle, if by some strange chance he enters politics, is more than likely to come to grief. Politically, our democracy is a glorification of the second-rate. It is cheap. It is tawdry. It is vulgar. It is prone to foolishness, attracted by mediocrity, and marked by ineptitude. This is part of the price that we pay for the democratization, not merely of politics, but of life. We may develop a better bargain. That is what we hope for. Meanwhile, there is no alternative to democracy that would safeguard human rights.

2. THE POLITICIAN

If democracy were not better than its politicians, it would be in sad case. It would be hopeless. For the politician is the personal embodiment and the practitioner by profession of all the evils of democracy. He is mediocre. He is tricky and insincere. He is either without principles or, if he has any, they are unintelligent and even childish. He is ignorant of government and understands almost nothing save the comparatively simple legerdemain of fooling the voters. He will say or do anything to get into office and anything to stay there. He is democratic only in the sense that one vote looks as good as another to him. Given half a chance, he shows all the characteristics of a petty tyrant. He is ready to trade with any group regardless of principle. He is commonly the slave of his party—what is known as “regular.”

Our system of party government, indeed, affects un-

favorably both the voter and the politician. For any office—certainly for the higher ones—the voter has a choice between only two effective candidates. In most campaigns it is difficult to see wherein these candidates differ. Both are after the same thing—a political job. Both will declare any sort of belief and promise anything in order to get that job. The predicament of the independent voter in this country is sadly ludicrous and ineffectual. He jumps from one to the other of the two major parties and gains nothing by his independent agility. Or he casts his vote bravely for a minor candidate whose failure is a mathematical certainty. Or perhaps he is disgusted and doesn't vote at all—which is, for a man of genuinely intelligent and liberal opinions, practically as good a course as any other. Not quite; upon some issue, even between major candidates, there may be a real ground of choice. But the liberal has to swallow a lot that is offensive in order to support one thing which meets with his approval. And, even so, he has no assurance that the candidate will be faithful to his stand on that issue. Party slogans and traditions, too, confuse the voters and make it easy for the politicians to rely upon unrealistic formulas and avoid any bold original confrontation of the issues of the day.

Here, however, I flatter the politicians. They have no boldness and no originality in their makeup, so it is easy for them to avoid showing these qualities. But party government prevents them from suffering because of the lack of these qualities, and indeed rewards them specially for their tame unimaginative conformity. The men who play the political game—even the best of them—are not men of character and culture. When they are, it is necessary for them to suppress or conceal their better selves. It is simply axiomatic that, saye in most rare instances, no man

of courage, principle and originality can succeed in politics. There are of course in political life honest men without ability and able men without honesty; there are men who foolishly believe in the nonsense they talk; and others who are cynically superior in their private thoughts to the bunk they employ for political purposes, yet who cannot be outdone in sophistry and platitudes. Occasionally a man of real brains and forcefulness wins a place in political life; yet no man who is in politics can be entirely free—not even a Borah, a LaFollette or a Reed: they too must to a certain extent “play politics,” American style.

These are men of a high order, but what of the average politician who represents the glories of democratic government? He is far below such men and is a very poor creature indeed. He has, as I say, no real convictions on any subject: none that he has carefully and intelligently thought out; none that he will not sacrifice at the drop of a hat for a political advantage. He has really no ideas above the crowd. He is *one* of the crowd. His tinsel distinction is a joke that scarcely even merits a laugh. It is so infrequent that it is absolutely surprising when a politician shows a trace of independence. When he does, he is quickly brought into line by the agents of an interested minority or by the leaders of his party. Either the people are indifferent or they have no inkling of what is taking place behind the scenes. By political trickery they are led to support their enemies and oppose their friends.

The voters are the more easily managed by the politicians because they have no clear set of important well-understood principles to guide them. Their votes are opportunistic and narrowly selfish. Dangle a specific promise on one issue before the voter, and he will overlook everything else and uncritically accept nine parts bunk

for one part favoritism to his class, his community or his prejudices. We see this tendency illustrated both in the case of the "wets" and the "drys." Many voters care for nothing but a "wet" plank in a political platform. And many "drys"—certainly the leading "dry" organizations—appear absolutely indifferent to any phase of political thought or practice so long as their special aims are endorsed.

These facts are carefully kept in mind by the politician. Indeed, their consideration is second nature to him. He knows that a superficial demagoguery is far more effective than a sound discussion of issues. He knows that the voters can be bribed, as it were, with some particular promise and thus be diverted from more important general questions. He knows that voters have short memories. He knows that platitudes are dearer than principles to the hearts of the voters. He knows that he must step warily and not offend any common prejudice—though ordinarily he needs no such caution, for he shares that very prejudice himself.

What can one expect of the politician when first and last his main or entire study is to be popular? Surely that attitude does not make for courage nor originality, for great thoughts nor great deeds, for honesty nor full-length individual merit, for a wider vision than that of the common man or the party leader. Imagine a man going into politics with the sole object of studying what is true and proclaiming it frankly; of thoroughly examining every issue and announcing his conclusions whether they are popular or not; of refusing to discuss issues concerning which he has not been able to form a sound opinion; such a man would flash brilliantly and eccentrically on the political horizon and the next moment "pale his ineffectual fires." No—the politician has ten command-

ments all compressed into one: Get the votes. Every act and every word of the politician is meant to further this object.

And, barring the surrender of self-respect (which doesn't seem to bother most politicians overmuch), what is easier than the political life? It requires less actual knowledge and a lower kind of skill than any other vocation. The politician knows less about his job (as an actual worker at the business of government) than any mechanic, professional man or business man. His training is all in getting an office, not in filling it worthily. Technically, he is incompetent. Intellectually, he is swamped by the crowd, his beliefs being of the bunkistic and popular pattern. Of principle he has little or none, and quickly loses what little he may have.

It may be said that the chief virtue, if so it can be called, of the politician is negative. There is enough restraint upon him that he does not destroy our liberties. His graft does not impoverish the country as did the terrible exactions of monarchs in the flourishing days of irresponsible government. He does not keep the machinery of government from working. As we have said, men of a higher order have managed government in the past but their superior abilities only made tyranny more effective. We cannot admire the politician. In fact, we deplore him. But we can tolerate him better than we could a brilliant and powerful tyrant. And in spite of the confusion and indifference in our democracy, the politician is not simply an irresponsible agent. He acts irresponsibly at times, but there are limits beyond which he cannot go. Intelligent men ignore him or consider him with contempt. They are indifferent to the important questions that underlie politics; but they are skeptical regarding the surface of

politics. They realize that the genuine study of political questions is beyond the practicing politicians.

3. ECONOMICS AND DEMOCRACY

We have certain broad human rights under democracy, but it is a fallacy to regard political democracy as conferring an equality of power and opportunity. And it is an illusion to believe that the superficial machinery of politics is the controlling force in the country's life. In this highly developed industrial age, when the means of wealth and influence are concentrated into a comparatively few hands, there is even serious question as to how valuable may be the right to vote. It confers very little if any real power concerning a large field of human interests: namely, the economic field. A worker and a capitalist, for example, are not on an equal footing because each has a single vote. They are not even equal politically, for the capitalist can heavily subsidize the great political organizations and impress upon them and, through them, upon the government his economic interests. The viewpoint of labor may legally be entitled to propagate itself as freely as that of capital; but the former is not financially in the same position to spread propaganda.

It is, however, strictly on the economic field that the inequality is most marked. Of late years we have become very familiar with the term, "industrial democracy." It has been more and more clearly perceived that our political and economic ideas are inconsistent. We have the democratic idea in politics and the autocratic principle in industry. What is most vital to the worker—the management of the industrial system by which he makes his living—is as much outside his control, as much imposed upon him from above, as was despotic political government two centuries ago upon the subjects of monarchy.

The worker is practically excluded from power in the very things where power is most important to him. I say "practically": by his collective organizations, his unions, the worker has gained some power; the union can deal with capitalists more effectively than could the individual workingman; and the unions have been successful in enforcing certain standards of wages and working conditions. But obviously this is not industrial democracy. It is industrial war. And it gives the workers a very limited share in the control of industry—no share really in the larger control, which determines the directions and aims of the system.

Here we face of course a complicated problem, or many problems, which experts (not propagandists) are still trying to solve. It would be presumptuous for me to write glibly as an authority on economics and the management of industry. To what degree and in what manner should workers have, not simply immediate consideration as to wages and working conditions, but a really democratic voice in the control of our economic activities? I don't know. It is not as simple as voting on the political field. We have the ideas of socialism, syndicalism and a conservative scheme of semi-democratic factory management which has been tentatively applied in some places. Perhaps somewhere between the extremes of autocracy and democracy will be found the solution. It only fits my present purpose to point out the economic situation as it affects the principles of democracy in government.

It is clear, for example, that the realities of democracy in our modern age cannot be what they were in the society of the eighteenth century. It is a long journey from the idealism of a Jefferson in a simple social environment to the capitalistic administration of a Coolidge

in a complex social environment. Our country does not offer the same natural economic equality that prevailed in the days when there was plenty of free land and when industries were incipient and small, easily financed and managed. Broadly speaking, our political system has remained the same—based upon the eighteenth century ideal of political democracy—while a vast new industrial system has developed. In view of these changed conditions, it is plainly a fiction to talk of democracy as if it were only a question of the right to vote. That part of our life which is not touched or governed by politics has grown enormously and between men there has been a widening process of inequality.

These conditions enable radicals, with a good deal of justice, to criticize the merely political ideal of freedom and suffrage. Formerly political revolution, out of which came democracy, dominated the thoughts of men. Now the vital issue is that of industrial revolution—or, short of revolution, a measure of industrial democracy. As I say, the details are for experts to consider. But as for the main principle, when it is attacked on the score of impracticability, we can remind ourselves that the same objection was made to political democracy. Men in authority have never believed that their authority could rightly or safely be shared. At every stage of the progress of freedom and democracy it has been insisted that the people were not fit to manage their own lives in this or that field. And when authority has been forced to recede from one position, it has taken an equally dogmatic stand on some other ground. It is certain, at any rate, that so long as capitalists control the industries and jobs, the people may vote every day in the year instead of once every year or two years or four years, yet not really be free men. Not only do their votes on political questions

have no relation to their more vital interests on the industrial field: but the two great parties are capitalistic in their principles and aims, so that the worker may vote for either the one or the other without affecting his status as a worker. It is, to all economic intents and purposes, "six of one and half a dozen of the other." To be sure, the worker always has many "friends" in every campaign. It is a fine, large, meaningless announcement for the politician to make. He knows that it is only a gesture, and a hypocritical gesture too, and the worker should have learned as much long ago; many have learned. The aims of industrial democracy might be realized, broadly, in one of two ways: either the sphere of political control could be extended—that is to say, we might extend the machinery of democracy that we already have to industry; or, non-politically, a greater share in the management of industry could be given to the workers. The former method has indeed been tried to a considerable extent in the various agencies of government control, and a few trials here and there have been made of the latter principle. It is still a disputed problem, scarcely touched in a practical way, and a much larger problem than the establishment of political democracy. Yet until this problem is solved political democracy will have serious limitations and will mean even less than it did in a simpler age.

4. SOME DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

Granting that democracy in the main works better for the greatest number than any other form of government, and that it does guarantee human rights, we may glance at one or two familiar fallacies that flourish under the inspiration of democracy. There is, for example, the notion that one man's opinion is as good as another's:

the notion of equality in importance of opinion, regardless of how that opinion has been reached, whether impulsively or under the influence of a ranting demagogue or by a process of real reflection and investigation. This notion was bound to blossom forth as a democratic ideal. It is regularly encouraged by politicians, some of whom actually believe it (perhaps realizing that only upon the support of such a theory can their own opinions be entitled to respect). At any rate, even though he knows better, the politician is never more effective than when he flatters the voters upon their equal sovereign intelligence. His object, of course, is to take advantage of their equal sovereign foolishness or gullibility. That opinions are valuable according to the knowledge and brains that are put into them is a point which need not be labored. Democracy means equality of right in opinions, not equality of intelligence in opinions. The one can be assured by law, the other cannot.

Another distortion of the democratic principle is the notion that the majority has absolute wisdom and authority over every field of human activity. This notion has grown up within the past few decades, and is strikingly in contrast with the more primitive individualism which obtained in the nineteenth century. It is partly an out-growth of the need for administrative regulation in our complex society. This regulation, however, has been carried beyond the plain, practical necessities of social orderliness and extended to moral questions. It has gone beyond the social to the personal. There are many who actually seem to believe that the individual has no rights—or that a minority has no rights—which the majority is bound to respect. This notion took its most ridiculous form in the anti-evolution legislation in Tennessee, and in the crusade for excluding evolution from the schools

which was more widely conducted on this very plea that the majority had a right to dictate the "truths" of education. In a word, it was said in effect that we could determine the truth by taking a vote. If the ignorant majority wins, this means (according to this queer theory of democracy) that the intelligent minority is wrong.

The operation of this extreme and unjustifiable principle is also seen in numerous sumptuary laws, which cannot be defended on the ground of social necessity, which cannot be upheld as properly the business of the voters or the government, but which constitute a rank interference with personal liberty. Once admitted, this principle has no limits in its application. If we can be prevented from attending theaters on Sunday, we can with equal justice be compelled to attend churches. If we can be stopped from drinking, we can be stopped from smoking. If the majority can dictate to the rest of us "for our own good," then we have no rights.

The emphasis upon morality cannot in itself be strictly regarded as arising from a democratic ideal. It is rather a heritage of American Puritanism. In France, for example, democracy exhibits no such moral perturbations and preoccupations.

Undoubtedly the most general tendency of democracy is to exalt the commonplace. Politically this gives us a Coolidge. Socially it produces a common freedom of manners that is on the whole desirable. Culturally it encourages a condition of uniform mediocrity; although, as we shall more fully consider elsewhere, there is today a new intellectual life stirring in America. True, it is not a great, sudden, brilliant revolution, taking in the vast majority, but it is an extension and elevation of cultural interests. While democracy tends toward the common-

place, it is not by unalterable nature shut out from the possibilities of culture.

After all, the finest thing about democracy is that within this free system, unhampered by tyranny of Church or State, we can work out, individually and in groups, our own ideals. As democrats, we can criticize democracy and democratic culture. It is the virtue of democracy that it is not a hard-and-fast system politically or socially or culturally. Under it we have, at their best so far, the conditions of progress. It is not so long since man, body and mind, was in chains. What limits, then, can we place upon the possibilities of freedom?

CHAPTER X

Individualism Is Still Our Ideal, Although Conditions Have Gone Beyond the Control of the Individual

1. THE SPIRIT OF INDIVIDUALISM

NO survey of America today would be complete without a careful consideration of the individualistic spirit, both in its relation to the history of the country and to present conditions. Individualism is sometimes said to be a typical American quality or tradition or mode of approaching the problems of life. This of course is true only insofar as conditions in this country peculiarly encouraged that quality. Historically, and in other lands and times, individualism (which may be called the emphasis upon personality and freedom) has been an important force and certainly has been recognized both for its actual and its potential significance in the human drama. The ancient Greeks had a very fine appreciation of individualism. The humanists and rationalists who fought mediævalism were at once socially inspired and individualistic in their intellectual temper. It may even be said broadly that individualism has appeared, at any rate as an ideal, wherever and whenever liberty has been a chief and challenging concern of men.

The whole history of social questions is really that of the conflict between the demands of society and the individual and the effort to find a true balance between these demands—or *among* them, for they are numerous and complex. Great men, we realize, have acted individ-

ualistically although they may not have believed in individualism as a general principle. When we go to the root of social and historical questions, all must be told in terms of the individual man: not only leaders and heroes but the common man. To talk of "masses" is only to make the individual anonymous. But, after all, it is clear that the conditions, rights and beliefs of the masses mean the way of living of a great number of individuals. The individual may be (always has been and is today) lost in the mass, sharing his beliefs and conditions with the mass, moving as the mass moves and standing still as it does. The larger movements of history and the broad survey of conditions can only be made collectively, though they may have individual inspiration on the dramatic surface of affairs. Yet notwithstanding this collective view the individual remains, and *he*, whether great or small, original or commonplace, is affected by the circumstances of life as *one human being*. He is free or not, happy or not, with a life of his own, more or less impressed and regulated by the edicts and institutions of society. Laws, historic movements, social conditions work themselves out actually in the lives of men—this man and that man—and are not abstractions nor features of an impersonal entity called society.

America had an especially favorable beginning from the standpoint of individualism. Here men could escape from the oppressive weight of traditions and institutions that were solidly established in the old world. Such traditions as they brought—or such new principles—were for the most part in the nature of personal liberty and individualistic escape: for it is important to remember that America was settled by rebels, by men in revolt against the tyranny which bore heavily upon the individual in Europe. In this new land every man could make his

own life and fortune, if he could survive the hardships and perils. Pioneers are always individualists. Such were the American pioneers, down to the beginning of the present century. Such are they yet to a great extent in tradition and common custom. The birth of the United States as an independent republic was decidedly in the spirit of individualism. The Declaration of Independence asserted not merely the collective but the personal rights of men. It was an outstanding document of individualism. Its bold spirit was quickly eclipsed by more cautious and aristocratic politics, but the spirit of individualism remained and revealed itself conspicuously in the social, economic and political life of the republic until our own day.

That spirit must still be reckoned with, though modern conditions have brought certain changes and challenges. Today, with all the pressure of collectivism and regulation, it may be fairly said that the average American is more individualistic than anyone else in the world. Partly, this is a result of the democratic idea. The American considers himself practically the equal of any man. He has the weakness of snobbery, it is true, and he is largely governed as other men are by the herd feeling. Yet, perhaps contradictorily, he looks upon himself as an equal, free, aspiring individual. It must further be recognized that traditions and customs of an undemocratic, anti-individualistic kind are not so pressingly influential in the United States. It is still a new country and one that glorifies the common individual man and that idolizes even its heroes as examples of free, bold, successful individuality. Centuries of aristocratic social usage do not weigh upon us nor command our allegiance. We have social distinctions, but they are comparatively recent, we have created them ourselves, and we do not commonly

respect them in the extreme nor as a matter of course. They are always open to question. The individual, if he is strong and bold enough, can always assert himself successfully (that is to say, in social and practical matters but not so easily in matters of intellectual opinion). There is a certain tone, let us say, of irreverence or of snappiness or brusqueness, in American life which is a sign of individualism.

I am not forgetting that the average American has his fetishes and taboos, nor that he is impressed by platitudes and by prestige, nor that he is far from being a fearless, free-minded individualist, ideally considered. Let us admit even that in his opinions, interests and general activities he has become more and more standardized. It remains true that he has, more conspicuously than anyone else, that individualistic spirit of democracy which has distinguished America from its earliest days. He is even too sure of himself, without sound or discriminating basis. He is apt to believe that merely being an American citizen is enough—that in his own natural person, without knowledge or special merit, he is an important fellow—that, to employ a familiar phrase of democracy, “one man’s opinion (or one man’s character) is as good as another’s.”

In the political sphere, as I say, this theory of individualism was announced and it has persisted throughout the development, away from simple early characteristics, of the American government. Again, in the economic sphere this belief in individualism has been cherished and defended by the average American—and it is today a popular appeal of demagogism—even though industrial conditions have gone definitely beyond it and now mock the departed reality of that traditional attitude. In social life, notwithstanding snobbery, it will doubtless persist

longest—for none of us is quite ready to admit that any man is better than we are. He may have more money, and we may envy him. He may have social prestige, and we may admire and wish for that. Even so, we look upon ourselves in the spirit of equality, encouraged by the belief (usually a vain illusion) that we can do likewise.

One thing that both opposes and encourages American individualism is our enterprising, changing industry. We are, on the one hand, restricted by the new collective industrial life. And, on the other hand, we are accustomed to quick changes in our way of working and living. We have in practice a great deal of collectivism; but we have an indifference toward precedent, at least in the practical features of our common life. It is a fact (and one that is quickly recognized by all foreign observers) that Americans conduct themselves more freely, more individualistically, than the people of any other country. The crowd may dominate but the individual expresses himself, talks freely and acts independently, and only follows the crowd because that is the easiest thing to do and he wishes to do it. There is not, commonly, a tradition which compels him or which seduces him tremendously as in Europe with its ancient background.

So, from the viewpoint of individualism the fact that America has not an old and extensive history, with hoary forms and precedents and traditions, is in its favor. Such things can be more easily ignored and a new life made. If we have less to worship, as it were, we have at the same time less to be bound by. Here is a new life that we can define or develop for ourselves. We are not beholden to the past, save as for a drama and an object lesson and, indeed, a list of examples which we are sensible to avoid. The individual—that is still the insistently proclaimed ideal of America, although conditions have gone beyond

the control or the common chance of the individual. As a social attitude, this individualism is good—and more needed now than it has ever been. Yet, practically, we must realize that, even with the aim of supporting or securing this individualism, new measures which are not confined to the individual must be employed.

2. SOCIAL ORDER AND LIBERTY

New conditions—in the main, they are obvious. We have a more crowded country, a more complex industrial and governmental and social life, and this creates more pressing problems of control. Once the individual was accorded relatively the greater emphasis and enjoyed a simple freedom of self-controlled behavior which reflected the simple conditions of society. Now we have to deal with crowds and with a swift, intricate life which must be carefully scheduled and regulated in its working details. It can easily be seen how the growth of industry has called for closer standards of efficiency. A few workers in a small shop in the old days had a greater feeling of individualism. Now they are forced to submit to the necessities of a tremendous industrial organization. The emphasis is less upon personal initiative and more upon mass co-operation. The movements of the crowd in our large cities are also more precisely directed, simply as a matter of convenience. We have to make some choice between social orderliness and a condition of heedless chaos. It works out advantageously for all concerned. It is recognized by the individual as necessary and that by obeying these rules he is the gainer. Our life today, absolutely uncontrolled, would be confused beyond belief and would defeat its own ends, whether individually or socially. The workingman in a large factory has his work made easier for him by efficient management. He fits

readily and harmoniously into the scheme of precise, divided, mass-scheduled labor. And while idealists may look longingly back to simpler conditions and lament the passing of the individualistic spirit in industry, it is plain in the first place that these modern mass methods are unavoidable and, in the second place, that the individual worker, owing to increased productivity arising from these methods, has a greater share in the fruits of industry. First and last, he enjoys a more prosperous individual life and he makes sacrifice in one way that he may gain in another. Co-operation in any kind requires some surrender of individual initiative but it brings larger results and thus decidedly pays for itself.

Who would wish (for an extreme illustration) to live a primitive life, although such a life carries with it certain liberties that are not possible in a higher social order? The cultivated interests and advantages of civilization have been generally recognized as worth the price of social control. The city man does not commonly feel that he is at a disadvantage compared with the man in the country because more obedience is required to traffic laws and other regulations. These regulations are easily obeyed—it is for everyone's greater safety and convenience to obey them—and the city man is glad that he lives in a more brilliant, interesting environment. He would not exchange it for a more simple, less technically regulated environment. In the vital things of life, he knows that he has a larger measure of freedom. He need not be so fearful of public opinion. He is protected by anonymity. Neighbors do not know his every move nor subject him to endless censorship and gossip. He has fairly the essence of liberty. The tyranny of oppressive laws is bad; yet to be meticulously beholden to the opinion of one's fellows is a more insidious form of oppression, and may exist side

by side with legal freedom. It is a paradox that where individualism in a technical sense is less, liberty in an intimate personal sense is greater. Here we perceive that it is an advantage to be part of the crowd.

What is more particularly important, of course, is the kind of social order that we have. We know that we cannot eat our cake and have it too: that is to say, we cannot have extreme individualism, every man for himself, and at the same time realize the many practical benefits of a developed social life. We must work together. We must yield to the demands of social harmony and efficiency. We must to some extent sacrifice individual impulses for the general good. That principle, however, may be carried beyond all right or reason. It may lead to the worst sort of tyranny, whereby a majority or an aggressive, overzealous minority, goes a long way toward imposing its own standards upon all, as a matter of moral purpose rather than practical and justifiable regulations; dogmatically, narrowly, and not truly in the social spirit. Let us say that in morals, tastes, purely personal habits a wide range of individualism should be enjoyed. We must distinguish (and it is not difficult if one really wishes to be fair and if one has no dogmatic, fanatical aims) between personal and social affairs, between what concerns only or predominantly the individual and what concerns society strictly for its own safety and order.

As a matter of fact, the simple old principle has never been successfully assailed that one man's liberty ends where another man's liberty begins. This is the well-known social basis of morality and law—the only valid basis. When this principle is violated, the rational aims of order are forgotten in the harsh, fevered aims of tyranny. Laws against murder, theft, violence, destruction of property or injury to persons are by common consent just laws.

They take from us no rights, although in an exact sense they do restrict our liberty, but rather they preserve our rights. Do I say that they restrict our liberty? It is more accurate to say that they prevent invasions of our liberty. Without such laws, and without a general observance of such sane limits upon action, we could have no tolerable social life. We must, first and last, manage to live together safely and peaceably; on no other understanding could we live together at all. Reasonable and well-disposed persons have no objection to this principle. You and I do not feel that we are imposed upon by the laws which restrain us from doing violence to our neighbor—it is not even a question of restraint, really, for we have no such violent tendency—we feel rather that we are protected, not restrained, by such laws.

Generally speaking, any law, any moral or social rule, that is based upon respect for the rights of the individual has an undisputed natural claim upon our approval. Its practical need and purpose is plain. It works to one man's advantage as well as another's. It recognizes no favorites and does not stand as an unjust and odious barrier to the sane development and free self-realization of the individual. It is simply the agreed attitude of civilization. Nor do we object to the technical arrangements of social orderliness. Here too we realize without argument the urge of necessity. Take such a simple, familiar feature as our traffic laws. We should have little patience with a man who inveighed against traffic laws as violating the principle of personal liberty. We can see clearly the necessity and the advantage of such regulations. They are fair to everyone. Without them our swift and heavy traffic would be impossible. They promote efficiency and safety. They illustrate admirably the kind of scientific control that is required in an intricate civilization. All laws and

regulations of a similar nature come under the head of social order that is consistent with real liberty. They are details of administration. We can have the maximum of such control with, at the same time, the maximum of essential individual liberty in thought, manners, tastes, and standards of behavior. It can fairly be demanded of any man that he behave as a social being; that he act in orderly fashion so as not to interfere with the lives of others; that he get seriously in no man's way nor step on any man's toes.

That implies, however, that he attend wholly to his own business. It is a positive principle. It means that he shall not presume to dictate, in a personal way, what his fellow man shall believe or feel or do. Those who have a perfect mania for legislation regulating their fellows cannot justify themselves on the ground of social order. They go ridiculously, indefensibly beyond that rational principle and lay themselves open to the charge of fanaticism. They are guilty of an unwarranted spirit of interference. To speak plainly, they cause social disorder. They are trouble makers. They are, in the popular language, busy-bodies. To mention one of the most outrageous examples of this interference, one that must always be emphasized when the question of social order and liberty is under discussion, Sunday laws—making illegal the theater, sports and other amusements—are absolutely without justification on the broad, intelligible ground that we have surveyed. It is obvious that there is no threat to the necessities of social order in Sunday shows or ball games or dances. Our lives and liberties, our peace and practical needs, are not menaced by these forms of recreation on Sunday. Such "blue laws" are merely the expressions of religious dogma. Far from being defensible in a civilized view, they are *uncivilized*.

Again, many moral laws are equally without sound social defense. They are, simply and solely, interferences with personal liberty having no origin in legitimate social aims. A law against the sale of cigarettes, for example, is plainly a piece of fanaticism. It does not come under the head of rational social legislation. The absolute prohibition of liquor is another instance of tyranny (which will be discussed more fully in another place) that cannot be defended on the plea of social necessity. Conceivably, society may have the right to regulate the liquor traffic (as it regulates automobile traffic or the purity of commodities or interstate commerce), but to prohibit it altogether is to be unnecessarily oppressive. Some of our laws regarding sexual conduct are foolish and indefensible, encroaching upon the proper field of personal discretion and desire. Of course, the puritanical fanaticism of some of our laws—and of some theoretical attitudes that would go considerably beyond our present laws—is impossible of enforcement. They are not possibly to be reconciled with human nature. Their assumptions and aims are impracticable in the extreme. As a rule, they are not enforced and they only claim occasional victims.

It is the principle, however, that we must persistently oppose. In a complex society which has more than ever good reasons for a regulatory attitude in some things, it is especially necessary that we should guard against illogical, inexcusable distortions of this attitude. Just because we have developed beyond the earlier simplicity of society, and because we have sound technical demands for discipline and management, it does not follow that we should forget the important ideal of personal liberty. We certainly do not want a society of automatons, of robots, of merely mechanical creatures. Man—the individual man—must still be fairly considered. We must keep care-

fully in mind the necessity of letting the individual have all possible freedom consistent with the absolutely imperative demands of social order.

It is clear, for example, that we cannot logically require on the plea of social necessity a uniformity of opinion. Thought must be free—and indeed with the growth of modern society the emphasis upon freedom of thought is more marked. This is chiefly due, of course, to the growth of intelligence. Rationalism has kept pace with modern life. Knowledge has emancipated us from the delusions and dogmas of the past. In olden times faith was a more powerful influence. Now, reason steadily displaces faith and, furthermore, the right of every man to his opinion is more readily recognized. Even so, there is a tendency still alive and menacing to demand conformity to certain prevalent, established opinions. There is a mistaken idea that social order means social sameness of sentiment and thought—that the “good citizen” must subscribe to a certain creed. Legally, to be sure, the citizen is under no compulsion. In relative degrees, according to his social environment and economic situation, he has freedom of opinion. His worst enemy is public opinion, when that is definite and aggressive, rather than the law. Yet the pressure of conformity is insidious and insistent, and it is important that the principle of resistance to this pressure should be emphasized in season and out and should never be lost sight of.

It is enough to say that no man and no group of men can be sure of what is truth; that we cannot confidently conform to any view of life; that only in the free play of opinion can we realize intellectual progress, correct our mistakes, and learn the truth. When any arbitrary standard of thought is set up for society, the consequence is intellectual stagnation. We know, for one thing, how

emotionalism and self-interest dominate public opinion. We cannot trust the viewpoint of any individual or any class as having been, in the first place, reached by genuinely intelligent methods. Selfishness and narrow, temporary interest plays too large and overbalancing a rôle in the thinking of mankind. It is essential, then, that we should preserve the principle of freedom. A tyrannical idea of life cannot long sustain itself. It runs quickly into excesses and impossibilities. Thus dogma impedes the fine, lively play of intelligence. Conformity not simply operates to handicap a thoughtful individualism but, though defended on social grounds, actually works to the detriment of the social life: for it imposes standards of thought by which men cannot possibly, practically live: and in the long run the reaction is bound to prove extremely disagreeable if not disastrous.

It is not, then, conformable to the idea of social orderliness that thought should be controlled. Such control may serve the interests of certain individuals or classes—it is certainly an effective instrument of tyranny—but it has no justification in the general welfare. We want as much personal liberty as we can possibly have consistent with the plain, positive interests of society. As I say, it is not difficult to tell what things are personal and what things are social in their nature. It depends principally upon the good will of toleration: upon a willingness fairly to make such a distinction. The fanatic, we know, is not willing to make such a distinction. He is continually seeking for some way to interfere with his fellow man. It is not enough for him to conform to necessary social technique, but he must aggressively war upon his neighbor to limit that neighbor's personal freedom of movement. He is not a *social* thinker but an *individual* nuisance.

3. "LIVE AND LET LIVE"

"Live and let live"—that is a good old principle which cannot be too often nor too insistently repeated. It expresses quite well the individual no less than the social duty of man. It means, first of all, toleration. Do another man's ideas seem unpleasant or untrue to you? Do his tastes seem wrong? Do his habits seem foolish or illogical? That is not properly your concern. You are not in that respect and to that extent your brother's keeper. If he does not definitely encroach upon your rights, then you have no just complaint. It will be a considerable job if you manage your own life and conform reasonably to your own ideals. Reflect upon the uncertainty that you sometimes feel about a course of action, and then ask yourself whether you are capable of ordering another's life. If you are at all honest and reasonable—if you are not too far gone in fanaticism—you will perforce admit that you are not in a position to tell others how they should behave. As an individual you are in no such position to tell others how they should behave. Nor as a citizen or voter—as a maker of laws and participant in social decrees—are you qualified to say what is the righteous and permissible kind of life. It will be a great and sufficient victory for you if you manage your own life sensibly and work out a philosophy of living in accordance with which you can meet, satisfactorily to yourself, the problems of every day.

It is not simply a question of whether another man's behavior displeases you; of whether it agrees with your dogmas of right living; of whether it offends your notions of propriety or virtue. One man has no right to apply such criteria to another man in a compulsory way; for that other has exactly the same right to his notions of behavior; and so long as he does not actually infringe upon your rights, you have no occasion to interfere with

him. It seems clear to me that a great deal of the spirit of interference with personal liberty, which appears ominously in our public opinion and even in our laws, is due entirely to this dogmatic attitude. It does not arise from any real injury, self-defense or social necessity. It is not practical nor vital. It is only a matter of feeling. Those who consider themselves peculiarly righteous do not like to see others behave themselves freely. They resent simply as *a matter of feeling* opinions and habits which do not actually hurt them. They are not satisfied unless everyone believes and behaves as they do. They are, in a word, bigots. Now, bigotry is no sound excuse for social legislation. Your mere disapproval of another man's way of living is no justification for interference with him. He may scandalize you, but that is no ground for imposing your viewpoint upon him. Perhaps he is equally scandalized by your attitude; in which case we must fall back upon the old principle of "live and let live."

A great deal of the restrictive agitation and legislation today is solely a matter of *bad feeling*. Take, as an outstanding example, the religious type of mind. It is upset, beyond all reason, by any contradiction of its dogmas. It cannot tolerate any difference of opinion or behavior. This type of mind is hurt—hurt emotionally and intolerantly—by anything which does not agree with its view of life. There may not be and there usually is not any actual encroachment or injury. There may be no interference with the religious man's way of life nor with the interests that mainly concern him. There may be no such definite ground for attack. Yet, merely in his feelings, the pious man is outraged. He cannot bear to think that others are doing what he regards as impious. He cannot, in a word, admit the right of others to differ from him or to follow a different course in life. He demands

absolute conformity, whether it affects his own freedom and rights or not. Obviously, we cannot reasonably justify this attitude on any plea of social necessity. If the conditions of society demand that we live together agreeably, they must demand toleration of contrasting points of view, unlike habits, individual tastes, the last degree of conceivable moral freedom. We cannot justly take offence at ideas nor at what is called "a bad example." We have no right to complain save when we are practically, personally injured, save when there is a real interference with our own freedom.

We may as well realize that a perfectly harmonious social order is impossible. That is to say, we cannot imagine a condition of society under which everyone will be free from annoyance, inconvenience or hurt feelings. It is really a test of whether a man is civilized that he can tolerate such minor inconveniences and annoyances. If we were so disposed, any of us could find plenty of trouble every day. Slightly unpleasant contacts would upset us. A moment's delay would exasperate us. The sight of some bit of human folly would make us fly into a personal rage or call for some action by the law. As a rule, we are not so easily thrown out of balance. We have learned to give and take, to "live and let live." Very likely we annoy others and bore others as much as they annoy and bore us. If the conditions of social life demand that we conform to certain necessary regulations, and govern our movements with some due regard for others, they also require that we exercise a certain amount of patience and toleration. Even a sense of humor is very necessary, and is sadly lacking in all fanatics. It is a most dangerous thing for any man to be obsessed by the notion that what he thinks or what he follows as a righteous course of action is necessary for the good of society. That way madness—the

madness of fanaticism—lies. Within the limits of an orderly, safe, efficient society there is plenty of room for difference of opinion and behavior. It is a tremendous egotism which holds that one's own standards must necessarily, uniformly be followed for the welfare of society. Such intolerance is odious in the assertion and impossible of proof. Aside from broad, plain social necessities—which no man would presume to dispute—who can say what is right and what is wrong? Individualism has its important place in life under any form of society. For what, after all, is the rule of dogmatic ethics save the tyranny of certain individuals over other individuals? There is no such thing as divine revelation. There is no absolute truth or code that is indisputably to be obeyed. When we attempt to interfere with the lives of our fellows, we are saying—what is certainly egotistic and impossible of proof—that we are wiser and more righteous than they. Can we blame them if they challenge our authority to dictate? Can we deny that they have a right to live their own lives, so long as they do not oppressively encroach upon our lives?

We cannot, with regard to this question of social order, draw an altogether sharp line between radicals and reactionaries. The latter would make us slaves to the traditions of the past. But the radicals would confine us within the arbitrary limits of a regimented, utterly controlled and anti-individualistic society of the future. Some of the radicals would so confine us, carrying their idea of socialization to an intolerable extreme. There is the notion, for example, that the individual does not in any sense belong to himself but that he is merely a unit in society; that his health, morality, efficiency, his physical and mental status is properly the business of society; that he has no right to do anything—not even eat too much or

smoke too much or stay up too late of nights—if it reduces his efficiency as a member of society; that the individual, in short, is accountable in all ways to society. Here is a viewpoint that is simply impossible to maintain. No worse principle of slavery was ever enunciated. It leads toward the sociology of the beehive or the anthill and is certainly an inhuman, intolerant ideal. It is certainly an extreme and scarcely practicable ideal that every individual's life should be regulated in the most minute manner by social forms and laws. Such a program, if it were conceivable, would destroy the very spirit of humanity. It would set up a tyranny worse than any that was ever known in the past.

Personally, I do not believe that this extreme, fanatical tendency toward regulation will in the long run be successful. It is too strongly a violation of human nature. The individual is willing enough to submit to regulations which are plainly necessary to the ordinary business of social life; but he is not willing to surrender all freedom of tastes and opinions, all personal variations of the enjoyment of life. When any regulation is plainly essential—when without such a regulation a co-operative, collective life would be impossible—there is no objection to it. But when it is inspired only by dogma, when it assumes the form of a certain group trying to dominate unreasonably the lives of the rest of us, then we rebel. And, fortunately, we always will rebel under such circumstances. It is, after all, a question of prejudice or principle. Have we sound, rational, tolerant principles by which we can determine the balance between social order and liberty? Or do we let ourselves be unduly influenced by prejudice, thinking that certain dogmatic ideas peculiar to ourselves must be taken as the dominating rule in social ethics? Undoubtedly, most of the disputed demand for regulation (that

which goes beyond what all plainly see to be necessary) is of the latter kind: *i.e.*, it is merely the expression of prejudice. It has come to the point where the assertion of social orderliness (which is not really resisted) is less important than the defense of personal liberty. Our chief necessity, nowadays, is to resist the encroachments of dogma and fanaticism. Social measures which are necessary and practical—which have a technical basis and motive—are easily put into operation. Disputes arise when there is an attempt to exercise social authority over purely personal affairs; and such disputes are a healthful sign that human nature is still superior to dogmatism. We have not attained for nothing the ideal of modernism—of personal liberty and freedom of thought—but, with better organization technically, we have at the same time a degree of undefeatable individualism that is incomparable with any past society. We have this paradox, that the individual is in technical ways more disciplined and in vital ways more free.

CHAPTER XI

Reformism as Practiced and Preached in America Is a Dogma, an Insult, and an Oppression

1. PROHIBITION

THE most spectacular case of reformism in the world is Prohibition as it is attempted in the United States today, therefore it comes naturally first in a discussion of the general question of reformism—a particular instance which illuminates the general theme. It might be well at the start to remove some misconceptions, from two points of view. There is the point of view urged by defenders of Prohibition, who deride the opposition to this law by saying: "Oh, the only object of the opposition is simply to get something to drink." If that were true—accurately true—what would be its significance? It is not clear that it makes the opposition unimportant, frivolous or merely perverse. Naturally, the only possible object of the opposition, in plain and specific terms, would be to secure in a legally, safely established way the right to drink or not to drink as the individual may desire.

It would be exactly as good an argument to say that the opponents of censorship have, after all, only the aim to permit the free circulation of books and plays for the free selection of the people, letting each man be his own censor. Or it would be just as weighty to observe that those who fight the closed-Sunday movement are interested in the right of the people to amuse themselves freely

on that day as on other days. Those who condemn legislation against prizefights, or against horse races, or against the sale of cigarettes are, in each case, while animated generally (some more, some less broadly) by the idea of freedom, also interested in vindicating a special kind or exercise of freedom. Suppose we turn the argument around and say, "What the Prohibitionists want is only to keep people from drinking." That object (if they are sincere and not simply after prestige and power and profitable jobs) is precisely the one we should expect the advocates of Prohibition to have: we recognize that it is, specifically, a question of whether or not one believes in the right to drink. However, the Prohibitionists seem to argue that their opponents are somehow hypocritical or guilty of trifling because, as any man in his senses knows, they are in favor of the liquor traffic. They certainly are not discussing the traffic in shoes or tooth paste or cosmetics.

There is, again, the broad question of freedom—a general principle applied to a particular situation. Many who do not drink, or who drink very little—in whose lives drink is certainly not a feature of importance—are opposed to Prohibition because as libertarians they believe in leaving others free to have different habits from themselves. This is an admirable attitude, although the attitude of the man who personally wants the liberty to drink is quite as justly and logically defensible. The fact that a man directly suffers from or in his movements is hampered or offended by a form of oppression does not take away the reason for his resistance to such oppression. Rather, it explains that resistance very simply and forcibly. And even the man who at first glance impersonally opposes Prohibition will admit, fairly enough, that he too has a personal reason for his attitude: not the reason of

wanting a drink, but the reason of safeguarding the principle of liberty itself, attacks upon which are sure to strike him sooner or later.

At bottom, we all have a very good reason for defending the rights of the individual, however remote in certain instances they may seem from our own interests or desires. Our own freedom is involved with that of all others. Only in a free world can we be secure of the rights that we particularly prize. When we insist upon the right of men to express ideas decidedly at odds with our own ideas, it is because we want to enjoy free speech ourselves and we cannot securely, not to say honorably, enjoy it while countenancing its denial to other men. If today there is an attack upon liberty in some form of exercise that is not personally vital to us, tomorrow the bigots and blue-nosed reformers will extend their attentions to us. To let them win in one fight—to rest in a blind sort of selfish indifference—is to give them strength and confidence for another attempt. On the other hand, a lively protest all along the line against any interference with freedom makes that freedom stronger in its defenses. When we fight another's battles (apparently or superficially another's) we truly fight our own. It is with this clear understanding, broadly speaking, that many who are not drinkers or who certainly are not drunkards oppose Prohibition. Here they recognize the old struggle between bigots and libertarians, between fanatics and rational, tolerant men. In the main these reformers, or the ones who are most extreme and energetic among them, represent the very type that has always been arrayed against political, intellectual and social liberty. And these reformers are today illiberal not only as regards the liquor question but as regards other questions—for example, censorship, the teaching of evolution, and Sunday

amusements. Whatever the individual differences, this is the same spirit that animates all of these repressive measures.

It is true that no hard-and-fast line can be drawn: that not every man who favors Prohibition is a complete bigot, and that not every man who opposes Prohibition is a complete liberal. Personal predilections, as well as politics, make strange allies. Two men who disagree on nearly every other question may find themselves taking the same stand on Prohibition. The man who is generally a broad-minded, liberal person may find himself (I should think quite disagreeably) fighting side by side with the most severe fanatic. And the liberal anti-Prohibitionist may observe, with perhaps a cynical smile, others using the argument of liberalism on this one question who contrarily take an anti-liberal position on many other questions. For the man who, let us say, is hostile to free speech the moment his prejudices are challenged but who speaks eloquently about personal liberty as concerns Prohibition, one can feel little admiration on the score of principle. His motive, however narrow, is justifiable as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. He has a kind of selfishness which we are bound to condemn, since he favors only the freedom that specially pleases him and has no interest in, perhaps no use for, freedom as a general thing. He indeed has no other point consistently to urge save merely: "I want the right to drink." He is exhibiting an inconsistent and fundamentally insincere process of rationalization when he talks of toleration and liberty. He is a special pleader for himself alone.

So, the issue of Prohibition in the United States is not fully, as regards the character of the opposing forces, an issue of liberalism. Yet it is from this viewpoint that it is most importantly to be regarded. There is no doubt that

the conditions to which it has given rise and the controversy which it vigorously agitates are due to the reaction of an outraged principle, simply enough formulated and felt. It is natural and right that human beings should protest against an interference with their personal lives, whatever the excuse—which is in any case only an excuse. It would be intolerable that anyone should be forced to drink: and it is felt to be equally intolerable that anyone should be told arbitrarily that he shall not drink if he wishes.

It is, we are told, a moral question. But how absurd to say that the State should be the dictator of morals, that it should lay any commands or restrictions upon the individual save such as are necessary to protect the common liberty. If the State is going to take over the direction of all moral questions, what will be left for the individual to do except follow like an automaton a daily government schedule of conduct? He may be told what to eat and drink, when to sleep, when and perhaps exactly the manner in which to kiss his wife, what clothes he should wear, what opinions he should express, what books he should read and what plays he should see—in short, there is no limit to the possibilities, at once ridiculous and outrageous, if one admits as a loose general principle the right of the government or the majority to dictate morals, tastes, personal habits. As has been stated frequently and forcibly, all the State rightfully has to do with morals (or, to avoid that term, with the regulation of citizens) is to safeguard life and liberty. It is hardly fulfilling this legitimate and necessary function when it invades the liberty of a great mass of citizens.

An intoxicated man, but no more and no less than a sober man, must respect the rights of others. This does not mean that he should meticulously respect the preju-

dices and tender sensibilities of everybody—that he should be restrained from drinking because others are annoyed at seeing him under the influence of liquor—that it should be considered a social crime if he becomes at times foolish and rather helpless but harmless. Drinking men sometimes go beyond their personal rights and interfere with the rights of other men—but then so do sober men transgress and as a rule in a far more sinister and efficient way. After all, when you stop to think of it, most of the harm in the world is done by sober men: they are more capable of injuring others, deliberately and on a large scale. But we do not assume before the fact that a man is going to commit a crime and punish him on the strength (or weakness) of this conjecture. We cannot well take away a man's rights on the assumption that he will not or cannot exercise them properly. For one thing, there is a great difference of opinion as to what is proper. Some moralists have contended that no man should have "the right to do wrong"—but, then, *they* would presume to say what is wrong.

There are issues, however, which are clear beyond dispute: no man should take another's life or liberty or property. No man should actually invade another's sphere of personal life. When that happens, we are not really in doubt. But when reformers begin thinking how they can regulate and improve their fellows (*i.e.*, enforce their own ideas of right and wrong), they quickly come to measures that are doubtful or that are plainly unjustifiable, intolerant and even impossible. There is nothing more insidious nor more pernicious than this notion that a group or even a majority should pass upon disputed matters of behavior. It leads inevitably to excess, is inspired to begin with by the very principle of oppression and excess. It is not a defense of Prohibition to say that

it is a moral question, but rather it throws discredit, to put it mildly, upon the whole venture. Morals, as distinguished from crime, are for the individual to decide for himself. If it were plain beyond question that drinking is immoral, that would not justify stopping it (or trying to stop it) by legislation: we have no right to deprive others of the freedom of personal immorality. If we say that society has certain rights, we mean that individuals have certain rights, chiefly and generally speaking the broad right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Society cannot guarantee to any number of individuals, large or small, that their views of right and wrong shall absolutely prevail; that no one shall be permitted to do anything that morally offends them; that any dogmatic standard of perfection shall be adhered to, even inhumanly. It is this dogma that mainly inspires the friends of Prohibition: they are against drinking because they think it is immoral: they may talk about its social consequences but what interests them, first and last, is its moral nature.

Those social consequences are exaggerated: crime, vice, and poverty, said to be so peculiarly the products of drinking, exist plentifully without drinking being in any way the cause. Drinking may be associated with vice, but it cannot be shown that it produces vice—that if drinking were effectually abolished vice would disappear or would be diminished to any remarkable extent. A very small amount of poverty is caused by drinking: the larger poverty is caused by exploitation and to this the purely moral reformers are in the main indifferent. Concerning economic questions they are individualists, whereas concerning moral questions they are authoritarians. It is, at any rate, extremely unreasonable to say that because some men commit crimes under the influence of liquor, no man

should be permitted to drink. Or that because some men impoverish themselves through drinking, all should be commanded to practice teetotalism. The interference with personal liberty is greater than any possible element of social gain: it is a case of sacrificing a great and important principle for very small and indeed doubtful results.

There is, of course, aside from the question of principle, the practical question of whether Prohibition really prohibits or whether it creates greater evils than those which it is supposed to suppress. There are no complete, reliable statistics, but better than that is a personal observation, which many of us have made, of the actual state of affairs in the country. It is a fact that drinking is widespread and easily managed. It is a fact that Prohibition has not wiped out the evils of the liquor traffic but has added new and peculiar evils of a bootlegging regime that is nation-wide, well-organized, and irrepressible. Liquor of a generally poor quality—often wretched stuff indeed, when not dangerous—is sold everywhere and at higher prices and under absolutely unregulated, lawless conditions. Bars in the cities are open twenty-four hours a day, and bootlegging joints in the country towns do almost as persistent a trade. There is no one in the country who has to travel very far for a drink: if there happen to be local inconveniences, the individual makes his own stuff.

And this feature of individual manufacture is nationwide, flourishing in the cities where commercially the stuff is handy as well as where there is a degree of local aridity. I once made the statement that not only had John Barleycorn not been ejected from the street corner saloon, but that he had in fact moved familiarly into the kitchen and parlor and made himself at home as a member of the family. That may seem to be humor, but it is more solidly

the truth. Wherever one goes, one is invited to partake in proudly exhibited home-brew or in home-made corn whiskey or in domestic wine. Recipes for making liquor are exchanged in a spirit of pride and friendship. Gossip as to where the stuff may be bought or how it may be made has taken a leading place in the common talk of the people.

Booze has assumed a highly imaginative importance in the common life, more than it ever had before. It is, for one thing, the old story of what is forbidden being made thereby specially attractive. No matter how easy it is to get liquor, no matter how great a fiction Prohibition really is, it is nevertheless true that obtaining and drinking liquor has become a much greater adventure. There is a new thrill in it, and that is perhaps especially true as regards the younger generation: what is certain is that young boys and girls drink to a remarkably greater extent than in the past. Few parties, dances, joyrides or social diversions of any kind nowadays are considered complete without a plentiful luggage of well-filled flasks.

There is in all this, too, the spirit of rebellion. As we say, human nature does not take well to the dogmatic injunction, "Thou shalt not." Prohibition has made it a gesture of proud personal independence to join in the new drinking spree of America. To be sure, this is foolish from one point of view: no one should drink unless, law or no law, he enjoys it and genuinely wishes it. Yet, after all, this spirit of rebellion is much more gratifying to the lover of freedom than a spirit of supine conformity. It is a rebellion against government rather than against public opinion. There is no great antagonism of public opinion against drinking: rather, the opposite seems to be true. Drinking is more amiably regarded. One might almost say that it is respectable, while at the same time a sign of

defiance. It has been truly said that drunkenness was growing in disrepute until Prohibition rehabilitated it in popular esteem and threw about it the glamor of adventure and made it also a hilariously shared joke—the joke being, as all agree, on Prohibition. There is of course something more serious: there is disgust with the corruption of Prohibition enforcement, and there is resentment at the enormous expense of maintaining such a futile law, and there is a conviction that it is an outrage, under whatever pretense of fine purpose, to uphold a condition under which the country is flooded with bad liquor. Many joke about Prohibition to show that they have no respect for it: and they seriously condemn it as an expression of their stronger feeling. It is only the fanatical Prohibitionist who will allege that this infinitely curious, extreme experiment in reformism is a success—and of course defending it against all the facts are those who have good jobs keeping up the farce.

Finally, not to speak of the commercial distribution of liquor, the ingredients are too easily come by and it is too easily made for the people to be forced into teetotalism. Nature herself conspires endlessly and prolifically against this presumptuous folly of the reformers. A large army and navy, steadily employed at the task, could not hope to make this a dry nation. It is not possible so extensively to suppress human nature nor the use of the alcoholic materials of nature. Prohibition is an odious principle; it is a demonstrated failure; it is a natural impossibility. It is an example which the rest of the world, seeing its effects in America, exhibits no eagerness to follow.

And Prohibitionists emphasize (and exaggerate) only one side of drinking. They exaggerate its evils. Why not admit that it promotes sociability? Why not admit that it

is a source of wit, expansive feeling, and adventure that relieves the monotony and dull, plodding care of life? Why not admit that, as Clarence Darrow humorously but truthfully has said, while some men may be inspired by liquor to beat their wives, other men are inspired by liquor to buy their wives pianos? Really, the Prohibitionists have been too evangelically serious. One might think, to hear them, that the world must stand or fall by Prohibition. Yet the world goes right along in spite of the failure of Prohibition.

2. OTHER ASPECTS OF REFORMISM

In Prohibition we see only the most immense and egregious attack of reformism upon liberty and a tolerant, civilized conception of society. It is useful as showing the most weighty arguments the reformers can produce and also their worst errors and failures. However, the spirit that is behind this law is equally responsible for other designs upon the freedom and joy of life. Here is a new Puritanism, powerfully organized and financed, politically shrewd and unscrupulous and persistent, asserting to the extreme the business of society (by which is really meant certain reformist minorities) to regulate the life of the individual.

In America we assuredly have more of this repressive legislation, in large or small degree, in the community and the state and the nation, than anywhere else in the world. One reason indeed why many oppose Prohibition is because they envisage the further measures which the reformists will arrogantly press—because they see that unless a limit is marked and personal liberty clearly defined and defended there will be no assurance of liberty left to us. Undoubtedly the next great crusade of the reformers will logically be the prohibition of tobacco:

they will attempt to rob humanity (in the United States at least) of another age-old solace, another pleasant and personal vice, another delightful feature of a life that at best holds too few delights. Similar arguments can be used against tobacco. It can and will doubtless be said that tobacco blunts the moral fiber and thus is socially harmful; that it lowers the efficiency of men as members of society; that it is wasteful; that it is an annoyance to many non-smokers; that it is vile, immoral, unnecessary, etc. It may even be alleged that tobacco, in a less dramatic and more subtle way, sometimes makes a man lose control of himself as liquor sometimes does: for I would put no argument past the reformers—all sophistry and demagogism is grist to their mill.

If reformism in America should have a steady victorious progress one might even look forward to a time when tea and coffee would be placed upon the forbidden list. Why not, from the viewpoint of reformism? They are stimulants. They are cheerful indulgences, which fact in itself makes them suspect. They offer a fine, obvious chance for the reformers to busy themselves with other people's habits. Indeed, if the dietetic notion that meat is a harmful food, combined with the sentimental objection to the slaughter of animals, should become sufficiently believed we might have a highly moral crusade to enforce vegetarianism by law.

These suggestions seem ridiculous, yet the very principle of reformism is ridiculous and indefensible. As for the first-mentioned aim—the suppression of tobacco—we have already of course had warnings of that. It is still, I believe, in a few States illegal to sell cigarettes. North Dakota has (or had) such a law. Only recently was the anti-cigarette law repealed in Kansas, and also the law against prizefights. It was, for that matter, only a few

years ago that there was seriously debated in the Kansas legislature a bill proposing that all smoking in any public place should be forbidden—so that a man would have to smoke, like a criminal in hiding, in the privacy of his home, presumably being forbidden to smoke even on his own front porch, where an outraged eye might see him or an outraged nose get a whiff of smoke. Films of prize-fights cannot legally be transported by interstate commerce for exhibition to the public: a law which, by the way, is regularly violated—as indeed what reform law of this nature is not violated?

It might really be set down as an axiom that sumptuary or moral legislation will invariably be violated; at the same time it increases the contempt or the light regard of the people for the laws—or for the lawmaker. The people will not be stopped from their enjoyment by any fiat of foolish fanatics. They can be hampered; they can be annoyed; sometimes they are punished for enjoying themselves contrary to law; but absolute suppression as a rule is impossible—at any rate, impracticable. Of course, to interfere thus with the habits of the people, even short of the point of complete suppression, is an outrage. It should not be tolerated, and would not be save for the fact that such fanatics usually have the most powerful and persistent organizations. The average man wants to be let alone. The fanatical reformist is inspired by the active, eager desire to bother others.

In one kind of reformism—the least defensible kind, if there can be any degree in what is first and last utterly indefensible—a real condition of suppression is sometimes obtained: namely, in the laws against Sunday amusements, such as sports, dancing, theaters, etc. In many communities these laws exist but are not enforced; in some they are intermittently enforced; but in a number of

towns and large cities, such civilized and perfectly innocent opportunities of recreation are effectively denied to the people; in these places Sunday is a day not of rest but of boredom. Here the religious motive appears more definitely, but it is the old, intolerant, moral spirit of the reformers familiarly at work. It is the new Puritanism, pretentious and vicious, differing from the old Puritanism chiefly in its modern organization methods.

What are the assumptions back of this reformism? It is assumed, for one thing, that everyone should lead what a few professionally insist upon as a moral life. And this assumption, even should we grant the reformers' definition of morality, is preposterous in all conscience. Why should a man lead a so-called moral life and why should he strive to attain someone else's ideal of perfect virtue? Joy is a far better ideal in life than morality. Each, to be sure, has his code. It is taken for granted, and with regard to personal morals it proves to be the case, that most all of us are civilized and that we conduct ourselves as social beings. We are moral enough for all practical purposes. Let us then be joyous in a higher and freer spirit.

Another assumption that manifestly underlies the movement, or the various movements, of reformism is that we—that you and I, who are outside the sacred pale of the elect reform crowd—are not capable of deciding rightly for ourselves: that we cannot be trusted to form our own tastes and standards: that we need a guardian or a whole flock of guardians, that we are indeed but sheep to be shepherded sanctimoniously. It is an egotistic, insulting, bigoted attitude. How dare these busybodies assume that they are better able than ourselves to guide us—no, to compel us—in the right path of living? And what qualifications have they for this infinitely, delicately responsible task? See how they manage their own lives: not

wisely, far from perfectly, although maybe narrowly in a moral fashion. Even were they scientific authorities on the conduct of life, we should thank them for nothing more than their advice and should resent and resist any attempt at compulsion. But they are not moral scientists. Their ideas about life are extremely circumscribed and dogmatic. They have not prepared themselves by a patient, careful, scientific study of human nature, of the laws of action, of the relative values of modes of behavior. They are carried away by what is essentially an infantile theory of reformism. They have no equipment for the rôle that they claim, even if such a rôle were admissible, which it decidedly is not.

We reply to them—to the whole body of busily interfering American reformers—that we recognize no need of guardianship. We are mature and place no longer any weak or submissive reliance upon parents, professional moralists, or the State. We have the strength and the natural insistence of individualism to manage our own affairs, with due regard for a similar right in others. We do not intend to be slaves, politically or socially or morally. It is even true that we are seldom moved to ask any man's advice and then we do not absolutely intend to take it: we ask it perhaps only with the intention of comparing it with our own judgment and rejecting it as not to our liking. You reformer, it may just be possible that you know more about the good life than we do: but it happens that we are, for good or ill, living our own lives and not your life. For that matter, we have our ideas of what is good and right: but we do not attempt to enforce these ideas upon you. We are willing to let you go your own way and, so long as you do not get in our way, we wish you luck and long life. We claim no right for ourselves that we do not freely grant to you and to all others.

It is, finally, an assumption of reformism that pleasure is always under possible suspicion of sin, therefore it should be carefully watched and limited and regulated: and in the minds of many reformists certain kinds of amusement—dancing, sports, and the theater—are still in the doubtful and dangerous class. The old absolute Christian intolerance of these amusements is decidedly out of date and cannot be maintained in our modern age: but the spirit of that intolerance, disguised and modified but still at bottom unregenerate, lingers as a long-lived pest. It certainly seems true that any enjoyment beyond the ordinary, anything beyond the dull and commonplace, anything of a supposedly frivolous or hilarious nature, anything that lifts and frees the spirit of man, is either suspected, restricted, or openly condemned by the reformists. They are the enemies of release, of freedom, of adventure. They want to confine our spirits to their own narrow, dull, unimaginative routine. And observe, finally, that all of these assumptions of reformism are not due to any genuine social impulse or philosophy but are in fact anti-social in their character. There may be a perverse sort of logic in them—any carefully arranged position may seem logical—but there is no reason nor humanity in these assumptions. Reformism as practiced and preached in America is a dogma, an insult, and an oppression. It is neither reasonable nor tolerable at any point of practicality or principle.

3. THE RÔLE OF THE CHURCH

As the following chapter deals with the phenomena of religion in the United States, only a brief word is necessary here to indicate the relation of the church to our national problem of reformism. It is a relation that is really obvious and indisputable, although there may be

some confusion about its features and about its justification: not in my mind nor in the minds of many others, but in some minds. To state first a general principle, we know that of old religion has been confusedly and narrowly associated with morality. We might say that in religion there has been a narrow moral impulse and that in professional morality there has been a narrow religious impulse. This of course does not include great, rational students of morality who have followed fairly the social conception of ethics, who have judged actions by their relative nature and effects, and who have been considerate of individual freedom or difference in tastes. Morality, as we here consider it in the shape of special, aggressive reformism, is not rational nor based upon scientific investigation nor in the least solicitous of the spirit of freedom: it is not desirous of carefully separating social and personal conduct.

Today, as always, reformism of this particularly moral and self-righteous and evangelical brand finds its main inspiration in religion: in the emotional spirit of religion, in the ascetic and evangelical outlook generally speaking, if not in any specific creed. In America there is no doubt about it: the support and sustenance of reformism is found chiefly in the church—yes, in the dominant Protestant church—in the Methobapterian hierarchy which aspires to rule the legislation of this country. Back of the Anti-Saloon League—back of the agitation against tobacco—back of the laws against prizefights—back of the Sunday “blue laws”—back of the laws for sexual repression and darkness—back of every piece of repressive legislation, we find this same Methobapterian influence. No man is more opposed to the dogmas and to the whole spirit of Catholicism than I am: yet I know that in this country the chief influence against freedom and liber-

alism is the Protestant combination of religious sects, united for reformist objects, because it is by far the strongest: not the Catholics, but the Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians inspire the fanaticism of reform that blights America. It is notoriously known that Prohibition, for example, has behind it the solid weight of the Protestant anti-liberal conspiracy. And the same is true concerning every example of reformism that appears in our country. Who inspired and led and persisted in the sensational agitation against the teaching of modern science? Chiefly the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, although I do not mean to imply that the Catholics are guiltless—they are just as much our enemies, only they are not so powerful.

But after all the point is that, regardless of creedal distinctions, the church as a whole is actively the support of the reform movements in America: and always back of these movements is the religious spirit, trying unsuccessfully to disguise itself as social morality. We can easily see through that disguise. Freed from the spirit of religion, morality becomes at once rational and truly social, with ample allowance for personal liberty, without dogmatic pretensions or aims. But reformism in America is flagrantly intolerant, disrespectful of rational or libertarian considerations, endeavoring to force everyone into the narrow path of puritanical righteousness. Its irrational dogmatism would at once reveal its religious origin, but we need not depend upon such an inference when we can plainly perceive the activity and allegiance of the powerful church influence, extremely on the side of these intolerable reforms. I do not mean to say that all church members follow this lead of the church or share its sinister attitude toward liberty: but it is beyond dispute that the main official influence of the church and the character-

istic attitude of preachers is reformist and anti-libertarian.

Today as always the church is the inevitable and conspicuously marked foe of all those who seek, in Heine's words, to "liberate the imprisoned energies of the human spirit." In itself, reformism is obnoxious. It is without defense in principle, as it is without real or wide success in practice. If there were no suspicion of religion in it, still it would be necessarily fought by all lovers of freedom. It must, however, be recognized—and it is readily recognizable—that wherever the spirit of reformism is very ardent, back of it will be perceived the spirit of religion, the influence of the church, the old asceticism, however disguised, of historic Christianity.

So that, really, we may say that the reformists are trying to make Christians of us. They have changed their tactics. They cannot make us subscribe to Christian dogmas in belief. They now try to make us obey Christian dogmas in our behavior.

CHAPTER XII

If We Take a Large View We Cannot Say That the Events and Policies of American History Have Been Inspired by Christianity

1. A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY?

IT is commonly said by preachers and their devoted followers that America (the United States) is a Christian country. In the first place, they mean that the country was settled by Christian inspiration and the government founded on Christian principles. It takes no profound and searching view of American history to show the error of this assertion. We are apt to be misled by stories of men and women fleeing from Europe to enjoy religious liberty in the new world—and then denying that liberty to others. This was one influence in the settlement of America, but the main influence was economic. Men came to America in search of gold, land, and a broader opportunity in life. This new life meant great natural hardships, to be sure, but it also meant a greater measure of freedom and the chance to win one's way without the handicaps of the old, settled, exclusive, aristocratic social conditions of the European world. Nine out of ten who came to America were moved not by a religious impulse but by the quite simple desire to better themselves in a practical way. There was, too, the lure of adventure.

It is a fanciful picture that the chief and deliberate inspiration of the American settlement was the Christian

religion in any shape or form. Even so, why should that determine our attitude toward religion, if it were true? When the Catholics claim on the basis of antiquity to be the one true church, are Protestants impressed by this argument? Age, origins, and precedents do not—or should not—bind our beliefs. If we wanted an *American* religion, regardless of reason, Mormonism would logically be our choice.

There is, again, the contention that our government was based upon the Christian religion: a contention that is still made by preachers, although it is flagrantly unhistorical, utterly incompatible with the real situation. The fact is that the men who were leaders in winning the freedom of America and in forming the American government were deists, skeptics, free-thinkers. It is ridiculous to say that such men as Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, Washington, Hamilton and, generally, men of their class and character were Christians. If they did not go so far as atheism, they rejected the important Christian dogmas. Furthermore, they rather despised religion—any religion, Christianity or Mohammedanism or what not—as a force in the social and political life of man. They despised it because it was unintelligent. They feared it because they knew that it represented the very spirit of tyranny and could not but be inimical to free institutions. They were the last men to found a religious government: nor was the spirit of the time favorable to any such aim: then was the beginning of modern thought in a large way and that thought included resistance to the authority of Church as well as State—it being recognized indeed that the State had to be attacked through the Church.

In the list of illustrious American patriots just given let me now include the name of Thomas Paine—not a minor figure of the time, but a man who shared vitally

in the inspiration and creation of the Republic, in the triumph of American freedom, in the early formative life of this so-called "Christian country." He is still hated and lied about by the preachers. Yet his religious views were shared by the leaders and intellectuals of the time. He was only more bold and outspoken, not more orthodox, than Jefferson and Franklin and Washington. (It is said, however, that when Jefferson was elected President old ladies hid their Bibles, thinking he would steal them: his heterodoxy—his antagonism to Christianity—was well known. His belief in religious freedom, which means a non-religious or secular government, is equally beyond dispute.) If Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Adams—and Paine, no less—had been informed that they were establishing a Christian government, laying the political foundations for a Christian country, they would have been astonished. Such a purpose was farthest from their thoughts. Or, to put it more accurately, that was exactly what they did *not* intend to do. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are quite non-religious documents. God was left entirely out of the Constitution. Precisely, this was a secular government in its inception, declaring for religious freedom, and declaring in plain effect that as a government it was not interested in religion. So much is indisputable history, and how Christians can draw from that any encouragement for their extravagant claim would be a puzzle if it were not, after all, a commonplace indifference to or wilful perversion of the facts. Irresponsible arguments and untruthful or ignorant views of history are not new in the annals of human thought.

If it be said that this country was settled by Christians and that Christianity in some form or another is the dominant religion of the country, what follows? It does

not follow that Christianity is or should be the *law* of the country. There is no authority to demand a religious test for voting, holding office, making laws, or for the ordinary conduct of life. The Constitution created a Republic, not a theocracy. It expressly guaranteed freedom (indifference) as to religion. This meant that a man might subscribe to any creed or none: that he might be a Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, or atheist: and that no law sectarian or religious in its nature should be passed to regulate the beliefs or the habits of the citizens. Anyone who today urges certain laws or observances because they are said to be inspired by Christian principles is going contrary to the history, spirit and fundamental law of America. Far from being a justification of any measure, the religious motive is a condemnation: it aims at the very thing which the founders of the government were earnestly concerned to prevent: it means, all sophistry aside, nothing short of religious tyranny.

Let us stick to the facts. Are we told this is a Christian country? We reply that there is no state religion. And we further point out that Christianity is composed of such conflicting creeds that the identification of "Christian" is considerably less than precise. If Christians themselves could agree, then it would be perhaps a more practical question of what form and direction of Christian thought might dominate the country. But it must finally be said that no Christian or religious viewpoint, test, qualification or program holds right and authority according to the history, laws and realistic interpretation of the country's life.

This is not to deny that religion has been at least an ostensible (and at times a more direct and real) influence in American politics and social life. In fact, religion has clearly shown its inevitably bigoted and dangerous spirit

(the very spirit against which the founders of this *non-Christian* country were careful to set up what they regarded as effectual barriers) in numerous ways, by violating the principle and the guarantee of free, untheological secularism. These Christian bigots have shown no respect for the Constitution wherever it has conflicted with their pious prejudices. No further proof of this is required than the record of "blue laws," religiously inspired, in American legislation. Religious zealots have tried in every way possible to enforce their will—at least to incorporate that will in law—and too often they have succeeded.

Yet if we take a large view we cannot say that the events and policies of American history have been inspired by Christianity. Always there have been solid, economic, material motives back of events. Sometimes it is said that the Civil War and the struggle about slavery was a great moral issue: yet it was at bottom economic: and in the South religion and the Bible were adduced to support the regionally prevailing system while in the North Christian principles so-called were brought forward on the opposite side. The growth of industrialism in America was governed not by any Christian spirit or impulse, but rather by the rude, untaught, and seeking necessities of social evolution. And indeed Christianity could supply no clear nor adequate impulse to modern society, for it is on the one hand a simply primitive gospel and on the other hand an abstract or artificial theological gospel which has no relation to the realities of modern life. It is enough to say that neither from the idealistic nor from the doctrinal point of view has this been a Christian country in the mode of its development, in the tenor of its political sentiment, nor in the complexion of its common life. Facts are more important than theories,

and while Christianity—while religion—has sometimes entered as an influence into the realm of fact, chiefly it has been confined to theory. It cannot be said, certainly of modern times, that even the best Christians have been guided in their sentiments, allegiance and action by Christian principles, whatever they may be. There have always been more realistic forces to explain the common or the individual attitude.

The more one reflects, the more one wonders why this should be called a “Christian country.” The majority of its citizens who profess any religion are in some sort (scattered among the strange and contradictory creeds) Christians rather than Mohammedans or Buddhists or Sun-worshipers: so much is true. But Christianity is certainly not the law nor the custom nor the genuine belief of the country, not in any really complete and active sense of the word. Find a real Christian, a man who tries to live by the Scriptures and by Christian dogmas, and you will find a man whom the rest of his fellows regard as a “nut.” And rightly so do they regard such a man. What nonsense to say that a primitive gospel or an unrealistic, arbitrary, and ridiculous theology should be any man’s guide in the conduct of life! Even the best religious man is he who does not take his religion very seriously: who keeps it separate from life: who holds it merely as a sort of playful or at any rate remote belief, not as a program of behavior. I have no criticism to make because Christianity is not an actual rule of life in this country—far from it. I am glad that Christianity is so largely theoretical and unapplied, and I am most intense against it when it does interfere with life.

But what do our dogmatic friends mean when they say that America is a “Christian country”? They can only mean that the majority of its citizens profess to believe

some form of Christian religion, which as we know has many confusing forms. Yet what has this Christian religion to do with our life, our politics, our economics, our general development? At certain points we can detect its influence clearly enough, yet in general we cannot say—we cannot agree—that it directs the broad movements of American life. Nor can we have the slightest respect for appeals to support any program in the name of Christianity, for that is an appeal which is, to use a terribly hackneyed and much-abused term, un-American. Historically, legally, fundamentally, the American government has nothing to do with religion in any shape or form.

And even the extent of Christian belief in America is seriously debatable. Certainly, it is not so widespread nor extreme as it was even a few decades ago. There is no denying the steady growth of rationalism in recent years, nor that—to speak more generally—the modern spirit is antagonistic to religion in deeds if not in words, and even boldly in words. The insistence upon the Christian character of the country has, however, a more sinister aim than merely to claim an imposing number of the faithful. Back of this assertion is the ever-present desire to apply religious criteria to our laws and our life. The captains of piety want real power, not simply prestige and devout agreement. When they say, "This is a Christian country," what they mean is that the country should be governed by Christian dogmas—they hope, in fact, to destroy the very foundation of religious liberty (or non-religion) upon which this government was established by the free-thinking patriots of the eighteenth century. And that assumption, of course, we must deny and resist.

In this most important and aggressive sense, America is certainly not a Christian country. Our laws should take no more heed of Christianity than of Mohammedanism

or of atheism or of any other such belief. This is a matter of private conviction, which, to be sure, may be publicly urged but not enforced by fiat of law. Thomas Jefferson counted among the best things in his career his influence in obtaining the passage of the Virginia statute of religious liberty. Now by that Jefferson did not intend that man should only be free to choose among the various brands of so-called Christianity. He had in mind skeptics, free-thinkers, atheists—the choice of no religion as well as the choice of this or that kind of religion. The beliefs of Jefferson himself fell within the lines of no creed. A free-thinker himself, he believed earnestly in the utmost freedom of thought for others; and that principle was strong in the minds of the founders of our government, particularly where religion was concerned: there was no more vital principle pondered by progressive men in the eighteenth century than that of the separation of Church and State: without it, liberty was all too plainly impossible. So, the statement that America is a Christian country requires explanation and defense far beyond what the preachers can possibly give us. We admit none of their claims in this respect. It is first of all, in principle and unforgettable aim, a free country in which no citizen need be anxiously beholden to religion for his beliefs or his conduct.

It is disputable whether this is a country of Christians. Certainly it is not so in any agreed or dogmatic sense. We recall that a couple of years ago a questionnaire had considerable publicity, the object of which was to ascertain the ideas of people about religion. In the main it was ignored, which was a demonstration of the popular indifference on this once supposedly vital subject. So far as the actual replies went, they revealed the most erratic difference of belief on the various points of religion. It

was a strange combination of belief, disbelief and doubt. As a complete and consistent set of dogmas, Christianity did not emerge with any show of triumph from that test. It is clear that, at the very least, men nowadays in America are very independent in their speculations about religion. They do not on the whole subscribe blindly to any body of doctrine which may be called Christianity. Christianity has become too chaotic and uncertain for there to be any sound meaning in the statement. "This is a Christian country." In the last analysis, this statement can mean only that it is not a Mohammedan nor a Buddhist country. Nor, we grant, is it an atheist country—although there is reason to believe that in another century it may be.

What is practically important is that this is a country in which religion is a private matter. So far as belief goes, it actually is a private matter. But, unfortunately, in legislation religion too often assumes a successfully dominating rôle; so that we are not compelled to subscribe to any religious belief, but we are hampered by essentially religious notions of behavior. There is no law, for example, which compels us to attend a church; but we are told that on Sunday other places of entertainment are closed to us. And there is a wide range of moral legislation which is at bottom inspired by nothing other than religious prejudice. This indeed is a practical and ominous translation of the meaning of the clergy when they declare that America is a "Christian country." They mean that we should obey Christian laws: an assumption of bigotry which we must resist to the very end.

Let us repeat that rationalism rather than religion was the inspiration which led to American independence and the formation of the American government: and that actually the chief principle of our government is that it

should have nothing to do with religion, save to restrain it from violating the common liberty.

2. THE CHURCH—SPIRITUAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND MILITANT

It is not so many years ago that the church had really what is called “spiritual” leadership. Yet we need not be misled by this hifalutin term. Its “spiritual” leadership simply meant that the majority of people believed with implicit faith in the doctrines of the church, in the inspiration of preachers, and in the authority of religious sentiment in life. The church was a real and powerful influence. A man like Henry Ward Beecher could attain a great reputation, on a very slender basis of deserving character, merely because he was a preacher and as such accounted one of the elect and inspired. Sermons were listened to, church papers were read, religious ideas were discussed far more widely and seriously than they are to-day. It is plain to anyone, whether religious or not, that there has been a great change in this respect.

It cannot be said that the church “spiritual” is much of a force in our day. More and more, even church members question the outright dogmas or the *obiter dicta* of the clergy. The tendency is clearly toward independence of opinion. Even where there is not very profound nor interested thought, one observes a certain coldness toward the flights and fulminations of the pulpit. It is not that the preachers have changed so much—although they have changed to some extent and are certainly not the ecclesiastical Samsons and Joshuas of another day. On the whole, the gentry of the pulpit still thunder forth their absolute opinions and commands and presume as of old to be “spiritual” leaders. But they have lost their former influence. Those who respectfully harken to the

preachers are not intensely and deeply moved to adjust their lives according to clerical admonitions. There is also a growing body of men who stay away from the churches altogether and are no more aware of what the preachers think than is learned by an occasional glance at sermons reported in the press. Finally, there is an increasing body of convinced skeptics, if we may use that term, who regard all religion as bunk and all preachers as bunk-shooters. Scientific progress, both mechanically and intellectually, has dealt a powerful blow at the ancient pretensions of religion. It may be said even thus early, even while the formalities and the organization of religion still linger in our midst, even while many still profess the old beliefs—it may be said that science has already killed religion. Perhaps, indeed very likely, within a century we shall (or our descendants shall) see a world emancipated entirely from religious bunk. The fact is that religion depends absolutely upon a condition of ignorance and blind faith. Once admit the light of inquiry, and once establish scientific principles of investigation and bases of knowledge, and the bottom drops from under religion.

As I say, we have already come in a short time to the condition under which the old "spiritual" eminence and guidance of the church has ceased to be absolutely or generally effective. Go back a hundred years ago, and you find that men took their ideas—that men judged life and character and events—from the standpoint of the church. Hardly anyone dared to question—at least openly—the authority of the church. Religion was a most stifling influence upon the intellectual life. Preachers talked to some purpose, for men heard and believed them. It has been said that a hundred years ago preachers had the influence upon public opinion which newspapers have today—so by that one can estimate the change that has come about in

the popular—not simply the intellectual or atheistic—attitude toward the church. True, many still believe in religion of some kind. But they do not take their religion as seriously as people did a few years ago. They do not try so foolishly, and with such blind pathetic earnestness, to mix religion with the business of life. As a “spiritual” guide, the church has come to be confined mainly to matters, remote and impractical and dubious, of the “spirit.” Concerning the broad and vital issues of living, men do not so devoutly look to the church for “light and leading.”

Preachers realize this, wherefore they emphasize and seek to develop the other two aspects of the church: its institutionalism and its militancy. For many people the church is still a popular place of entertainment and social meeting. There friends can meet and gossip in a highly respectable atmosphere. Women can show off their clothes and men who do not enjoy the conviviality of the saloon can satisfy their social instinct. It is difficult, indeed, for the man who never attends church to imagine what interest anyone can possibly have in such attendance. Yet, as some men enjoy shows or sports or the sociability of liquor, so other men (and women even more so) find the church a place of—well, let us say amusement. The preachers are even more interested in catering to this attitude than they are in being “spiritual” leaders, although the latter ambition has naturally not deserted them. So we have the modern type of jazz sermon—sensationalism *a la* Elmer Gantry—high-powered sermons on the subjects of wine, women and song. The modern church tries consciously to put on an alluring show. It competes with the theater. The preacher who gives the snappiest sermons and who organizes the most attractive entertainment draws of course the largest crowds.

Again, the churches, in order to maintain their fast-slipping hold a little longer, have a number of charitable and institutional enterprises which serve to occupy a number of people who would otherwise be idle and without purpose in life. It is a thing of vanity, to be sure, and has no effect upon large social questions. But it is, after all, something to do and supplies an ostensible mission for the churches aside from their now exploded pretense of "spiritual" leadership. Possibly fifty percent of the interest that the modern church draws to itself is the result of these institutional activities. These activities, to be sure, only emphasize the declining interest in the church from a "spiritual" viewpoint. It is clear that faith is no longer enough. Merely the magic of dogma and devotion to the church cannot hold men nowadays. It must offer something of practical interest, and even what it has to offer in this respect becomes less and less interesting to the average man.

There is finally the church militant, which also signifies the slipping "spiritual" influence of the religious institution and its leaders. It is easy to interest men in a fight, so our modern preachers are always fighting or denouncing something. In the vernacular, they "raise hell" continually. They choose the matter of their sermons, and the manner no less, with an eye to the sensational appetite of the public. Lurid sermons on sex, on dancing, on bootlegging, on the theater comprise their repertoire. Elmer Gantryism is in its full flush. Where precise doctrine and high-flown "spiritual" stuff no longer draws the crowd, a hot account of exceedingly interesting sins proves to be a main attraction.

However, that is the least important—as it is also the least harmful—aspect of the church militant. Nowadays, to rescue its fading prestige and establish again its quon-

dam importance, the church enters politics and presumes to influence the attitude of men upon social questions. Always the church has loved power, and never more than when it sees that power going away from it. Prohibition is an issue that the church has gladly taken up, thinking thereby to recover a great deal of its lost forcefulness. We have also within the past few years seen a remarkable recrudescence of the old "blue laws," simply because the preachers have thought by such means to achieve power and notoriety. And within their limits the preachers are clever. They do not announce these issues as religious *per se* but as moral. True, they take opportunity to repeat that religion is the basis of morality, and that all moral issues are in the last analysis religious, but the chief burden of their propaganda is ostensibly moral without regard to religion. They have learned how, better than ever, to make use of the inherited and inherent Puritanism of the American mind—or, let me say, of many American minds. They shrewdly ally the church with the crusades to make humanity pure and perfect. I say "shrewdly" because this is obviously the best strategy they can use—whether in the long run it will prove popular is another question. But the church must have something to fight and nothing better offers itself than the popular amusements which are by many regarded as shading into immorality. I think that in the long run this will prove to be an unpopular tactic of the church, but meanwhile it does supply the excitement of a real struggle and rally the waning and scattering forces of evangelism.

In all three aspects—spiritual, institutional and militant—it seems clear to me that the church is desperately and vainly trying to save itself. Whatever lures are employed, the church still remains today an unattractive—even a forbidding—place for the average man. This

average man may not be an atheist; he may not think much on the subject of religion; he may even defend religion, vaguely, in an occasional argument; but he is not interested in the church and he has a rather poor opinion, a suspicion even, of preachers. We can of course explain a great deal of this indifference by the spread of scientific knowledge, the development of reading and thinking among the masses, in short the more active and general intelligence of the race. Yet I think the explanation goes even deeper. I think that one of the strongest reasons for the modern indifference to religion is the banishment of the ancient fears which obsessed the minds of men. This, to be sure, is the result of modern science and knowledge. But it is useful to define specially the modern indifference to religion, and it is, as I say, the consequence of abandoned fears, terrors, and superstitions.

A few hundred years ago—just think of it—the priests and preachers could easily frighten men into at least an outward respect for religion by tales of magic or punishment. In those old days there was thought to be a great reality in “threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise.” People did not know the world, and many indeed had no knowledge of anything beyond a few local square miles of their birthplace. Nature was a terrible mystery, thought to be productive of all manner of malign agencies and possibilities. Rationalism was confined to a very few independent thinkers. It was, to speak plainly, an age of fear. And religion gained much from that attitude of fear. We can see indeed that religion has steadily lost ground as superstitious fear has disappeared from the thoughts of men. When the preachers cannot threaten, they are doomed to failure. For they have no means to convince men; they have nothing useful to offer men; they never had anything except superstition with which to

dominate the minds of men. It is for this reason that, logic and reasoned conviction aside, I believe men in modern times pay less attention to religion. They live in a more enlightened, dependable and secure world. They are freed from the superstitious imaginings that were so general a few centuries ago. They have less fear, therefore less credence and worship. Considering the state of knowledge in medieval times, one does not wonder that religion had such a hold upon the people. Considering the state of knowledge—popular and ordinary knowledge, not extraordinary thought—in modern times, one can easily understand why religion has lost its ancient hold.

3. THE DREAM OF A GREAT REVIVAL

Religious people—and especially the clergy—are unwilling to admit the inexorable logic of progress. They will not see that circumstances have brought about a distinctly new age, a very different temper in men, and problems which religion is more conspicuously than ever incompetent to solve and for the solution of which men turn to science. They do not admit the change in so many plain words, yet their statements are eloquent of such a recognition. Science, they say impatiently, is the new religion of mankind. The term “religion” is scarcely an accurate one in this connection: but it is true that men now have a respect for and belief in science which has displaced to a great extent, which at any rate overshadows now, the faith which they once had in religion. Of course, the difference is that their confidence in science is more substantially based and has clear, striking elements of proof which could never be displayed by the church. Science is honored not by faith but according to its definite working. It gets results—and men are increasingly appreciative of these results.

But the defenders of religion say that this state of things will not last. Contrary to scientific psychology and history, they assert that religion is an innate need of the human mind and that man needs religion, in a sort, just as he needs air or food. People will return to the faith—so the clergy assure their followers. It is not a consistent position to say in one breath that people have not turned away from religion and to assert in the next breath that people will return to religion—but the preachers are easily capable of greater inconsistencies than this. At any rate, the final assurance which is given by preachers, when this age of skepticism is under discussion, is that there will come a tremendous revival and a mighty outpouring of “the spirit” which will bring men back to the old faith. The story of great revival movements in the past fills the hearts of the faithful with hope. They look for a similar wave of religious enthusiasm in the modern age. They even expect a miracle to happen and for men to be returned to ancient beliefs in the face of all modern knowledge and conditions.

It is an idle dream, none more futile. It is not likely that the clock will be turned back and that mankind will revert to such a pre-scientific attitude of mind. This is the twentieth century, not the fifteenth—or even the nineteenth. Fifty years ago in America such waves of religious enthusiasm were possible. They were familiar and almost regular phenomena. For then there was a basic belief in religion and the foundations of theology had not been shattered by science. Conditions today are obviously not the same—far from it. There is, in the first place, a lively and healthful growth of downright skepticism. Again, there is a general attitude of indifference toward religion; at the least, a noteworthy lack of the oldtime zeal, and, as the preachers say, consecration. The arguments and

sentiments of religion which were so effective even fifty years ago are now hopelessly out of date; scientific knowledge has knocked them finally flat. Not even on sentimental grounds can religion find a largely effective appeal in our modern age. For social reasons, as a tradition or as a gesture, the church may be maintained by interested groups; but its part in the actual life and thinking of the people is smaller each day. Its assumptions cannot be taken, as once they were taken, as the law of life.

It is perhaps enough to say that any such widespread revival and triumph of religion as its votaries imagine would involve a rejection of science, freedom, and all that distinguishes so favorably the present age. It would mean, in the most sweeping way imaginable, reaction. It is vain for the faithful to dream of such a great reaction. Hardly will the age turn upon and devour itself. We have not reached this point of civilization in order to wreck it and revert to a medieval, a religiously zealous, a church-ruled form of life. What the future holds is more, not less, skepticism. Religion will become weaker, not stronger. With knowledge, men's doubts will increase rather than diminish. We are not going back to the age of foolish violent chivalry, nor to the age of absolute despotism, nor to the age of blind superstition.

For some time yet we shall doubtless see frequently the crazy phenomena of revivals, although they are far less common than they were ten or twenty years ago. But today these revivals seize only upon the imagination of the yokelry. They enthuse and terrify only those who, in effect, live not in the modern but in an earlier, less enlightened age. These revivals do not have immense, sweeping social consequences. From them there comes no great, significant change in the life and viewpoint of the time. When the preachers talk about a great revival, they

imagine a tremendous revolution in thought or feeling which would, let us say, take America back to the bigoted, narrow, zealous religiosity of fifty years ago. And that is plainly impossible, just as it is impossible that America should return to the archaic methods of working and traveling. Far be it from me to exaggerate the enlightenment and liberty which we have today; but what we have, we are pretty sure to keep and to increase. The world will not again place itself utterly in the hands of religious folly. It is rather the problem—and the encouraging tendency—to remove the remaining vestiges of that folly. Science smashed the foundations of religion—or what men thought were its foundations. Religion could only revive itself sweepingly by smashing the foundations of science—in a word, by taking us forcibly back to the time before science—and that is simply as much an idle dream as religion itself.

CHAPTER XIII

America — City, Town and Country — Presents Different Expressions of Life and Sharp Conflicts

1. SMALL TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE

THREE are some important differences in America racially, sectionally, economically. There is also a moral or psychological contrast between the small town or countryside and the large city: not so much a fundamental difference in human nature as it is the reaction to unlike social circumstances, a greater degree of intimacy (or surveillance), a disparity of interests and associations which naturally produces a disparity of outlook. How wide the chasm may be, or how sharp the contrast, that separates the man in the small town from the man in the city depends of course upon the length of time (more than anything else) during which one has been subject to the influence of either environment. Years passed in a city atmosphere will do much to change the appearance and the psychology of one who originally came to the city as a purely rural or village specimen. On the other hand, a city man, spending years in a small town, will insensibly change his habits and his way of looking at life. Greater still, as we should expect, is the difference between one who has been born and raised in a city and one who has changed his residence after reaching the age of maturity: one never completely escapes from the essential, inbred character of early years, of childhood and youth and the first vivid impressions of manhood: one

may alter one's definite ideas but there is a certain simplicity or sophistication of nature that remains—the country or the city has, for good or ill, left its enduring mark.

That remark may be broadened: it may be said that America today shows the emotional traces of its agricultural, isolated, village-dominated past. Although American cities have grown remarkably in numbers, size and influence, America has been chiefly the product of the country viewpoint—or, at any rate, the most familiarly American attitude of mind has been thus made and marked, at times contrasting with a spirit of bold innovation in physical enterprise. We have seen in this country the rise of the greatest mechanical civilization—carried so far to its most typical and logical extent—which has been, however, associated with a stodgy, narrow outlook—one might say an infantile outlook—upon moral and intellectual things. It would be an error to call this rural-mindedness peculiarly American, but in its very extensiveness it has a more striking place in our life; for this is a large and new country, with not simply a small-town but a frontier background that predominated until recent years, with no long tradition of city influence, with large areas still having no realistic touch with city life but almost wholly rural in familiar interests and ideas. With few exceptions, American cities are scarcely more than expanded villages, folksy, sentimental, naïve and their population recruited chiefly from the contiguous countryside. This, of course, makes for vigor—it supplies the ever-needed element of new blood—but it also impedes the sophisticating, liberalizing tendency of city life: it betrays, even beyond the limits of the small town, the provincialism which is peculiar to small communities. Even so, the larger the city the freer the

atmosphere as a rule. There is, so to speak, safety and a protecting anonymity in numbers.

What are the leading characteristics of small town life and psychology? The most obvious fact is that one has less opportunity for a free personal life. One does not exactly live in a glass house, but that illustration is not so far from the point. One lives to a much greater extent than in the city under the watchful eye of the community. There is undoubtedly a viewpoint from which this community spirit and intimacy has an attractive simplicity. One seems to get down to the native elements of humanity, both good and bad, in small places. There are closer ties of friendliness, a more complete set of common associations, a greater feeling that the individual is identified with his surroundings. And at the same time there is more acute jealousy, there are keener enmities, there is more impudent and invidious gossip. The personal note is sounded more insistently, and that is good only where it is accompanied (as it all too rarely is) by toleration, sympathy and genuine friendliness or fairness of disposition. When it comes to ideas, morals, social questions, and the like, the emphasis upon personality is apt to distort and embitter judgment.

The herd instinct—the pressure of public opinion toward conformity—is stronger, or is more immediately and incessantly effective, in a small community. Everyone's behavior is more in the public eye. It is more difficult for a man to live to himself or to find a congenial group. And not only does the size of the small town make it easier for people to keep watch upon their neighbors, not only is the censorship of opinion more readily exercised, but the limitation of immediate interests facilitates such curiosity, comment, and censorship: here is indeed one of the main interests of the natives. It is not,

as I say, a basic difference in human nature. Most people are curious, suspicious, and scandal-loving. Put the city man in the small town, and he will quickly betray an aptitude for personal gossip, for spying upon and judging his neighbors. And the small town man removed to the city will, on the other hand, be less able to exercise this propensity, because he doesn't know so much about other people's lives and because he has so many more things to occupy his attention. And he will himself feel a new sense of freedom in not being too well known.

It follows that in the small town, as a general rule, there is a more acute and constant tendency toward moral judgments. There is, to put it another way, more of the feeling that anybody's business is everybody's business. Conditions do not favor independence of conduct. The individual life is always overshadowed by the community. Puritanism has always thriven best in small communities and the countryside. There is its natural home. The influence of city life is, unconsciously perhaps but none the less surely, to relieve one from these narrow personal and moral concerns and to broaden one's standards. Inevitably it has that effect in practice, although it may be not so much a change of thoughtful viewpoint as a change of interests and, in respect of knowing the business of one's neighbor, a lack of opportunity.

It seems to me that this excessive interest in other people's affairs, emphasized as it is by a moralistic and oppressively herd-like attitude, is the worst feature of small town life. One may talk in a fine strain of what an ideal thing is neighborliness, folksiness, the community spirit and all that: but when one thinks of its disadvantages, one cannot be enthusiastic about it in the world of here and now. Some day, let us hope, we shall be ad-

vanced enough to have such intimate neighborliness on a basis of freedom and toleration.

One advantage a man might derive from observing humanity closely in a small town is a philosophic, humorous and liberal understanding of human nature. But we find very little philosophy under such circumstances. Men do not *think* about the causes of the actions of their fellows, certainly not in a general way—they only *talk* about those actions and show too much readiness to exert social pressure in the direction of conformity.

It is further true that the small town is provincial. The inhabitants regard it as something very like the center of the world. They press the "booster" spirit unescapably upon everyone within the range of their influence. Strangely enough, at first glance, the smaller and less important the community, the more it swells with local pride. Yet upon reflection what is more natural? Everyone identifies himself with the community; while in the city one's attitude is more likely to be impersonal; although it must be said that this feeling of pride, leading as it does to so many prejudices and absurdities and in a large way outrages, is observed generally with regard to the town, city, state and country in which men happen to live. That feeling simply reaches the extreme, is more intense and unescapable, in the small town. On the whole, life in a small town tends to cultivate a narrowness of outlook. I am not forgetting that people in the city can be very narrow in their interests and views—especially in their views. Broad-mindedness is not a common quality anywhere, but the little local scene is surely more restricting. There the average man more easily falls into a rut and limits himself to the pettiest personal concerns. He comes even to love the monotony and minor measure of existence. He vegetates not only contentedly but proudly.

Yet that cannot rest as a final word about the small town. Undoubtedly the modern improvements of communication furnish a certain corrective to this tendency. There is a greater contact, through newspapers and books and movies and automobile travel, with the world at large. There is certainly a tremendous difference between the village of a hundred years ago and the small town of today. The latter is still characteristically local and limited as compared with the city, but it is not so isolated as its prototype a century ago. Nor can the small town escape the influence of the age—its freedom, its multiplied activities, its quickened tempo, its broadened interests. Naturally, it is the last place to be affected by these things and it reflects them less strikingly: but it cannot remain the same in a changing world.

The peculiarities that have been mentioned may always be found in the small town, although with the growth of culture and a better social life they may become more tolerable. Where a few people live together, there will naturally be a closer personal life and a narrower life than where a great number of people are brought together impersonally in a city. In small communities, men are naturally more influenced by immediate public opinion of a personal nature than they are in larger centers. Small towns cannot support the means of entertainment, varied life, and culture that are easily possible in the city. It may be pointed out that, while there is more knowledge of personal life in the small town, there is more freedom of personal life in the city. Only one exception, and that a doubtful one, may be made to this: namely, that with regard to conventionalities of social form, dress, manners, etc., there is more informality in the small town. There is some truth in this observation, but it is limited by the consideration that

manners anywhere are determined by the social status of individuals. City people who have no particular social pretensions or ambitions can be and are as easy and natural in their behavior and appearance as people in the small town. If it be his wish, the individual can behave more freely in every respect in the city than in the small town. Yet there is no doubt more formality and artificial tone to "society" in the city: at the same time there is morally less restraint: respectability, one might say, merges into sophistication.

Finally, one should point out that there is a difference in small towns. For example, a small town situated very close to a city reflects more of the city spirit. A small town in a highly developed industrial section has less quiet charm but more vigor and freedom than a small town, obviously more isolated, in an agricultural section of "wide open spaces." In short, the community as well as the individual takes color from its closest surroundings. Here we can see quite plainly the working of economic determinism. Consider the small town—say, anywhere from five to twenty thousand population—that serves a mining community. You will find that community more lively and free than you would expect from its size, for it caters to the desires of the working class that supplies its life of trade. But a town of the same size which serves a farming community will be much quieter, more sedate, with decidedly less freedom and variety in its attractions.

Taking the United States as a whole, there are more small towns dependent upon agricultural than industrial trade. And, notwithstanding the tremendous development of industry in America, and although the industrial attitude is certain in time to predominate, there is still a preponderance of rural sentiment and influence. It may

be said that this does not depend upon actual present reality but is rather a powerful tradition that has not yet lost its force. We have in America the momentum of rural and village opinion, which—at least as regards moral and personal issues—still continues forcibly. Mechanically, it cannot prevent the development of industry and city life. It is powerless to interfere with the economic trend of the times. It could not keep America in the position of a primitive or agricultural nation. Yet its moral influence, its general psychology, is still felt to a degree that is disproportionate with its present economic importance. We are too apt to forget how strongly the sentiment of small town and countryside enters into the life of America. This may be due to our forgetfulness that even the cities are inhabited by people who have come from the small towns and farms and who, although their narrower psychology has been modified, naturally retain to a great extent their earlier point of view. This explains the influence which Puritanism still has in an age that is on the whole unfriendly—indeed, increasingly hostile—to its ancient pretensions. Small town and countryside are the last to be modernized and, carrying their sentiments to the city, they impede metropolitan modernism. Old fashions, old standards, linger longest in the small community. They are more quickly swept away in the rush of modern city life.

2. THE CITY

In America, more than in any other country of Western civilization, the contrast (and in certain respects the conflict) between city and small town or countryside is more emphatic: for, while America has many large cities, it also has throughout its extensive domain many small towns, immense stretches of agricultural land, and even,

still, some frontier territory, almost primitive and sparsely settled. It is the greatest industrial country in the world. Here we have more large cities, and they are more modern. We also have more small towns. Our "wide open spaces" are greater in extent. We have all things on a larger and more varied scale. It is therefore true that if in considering the American city we are essentially considering city life everywhere (historical and geographical and racial influences aside), we are at the same time dealing with this city life in reference to the other currents of life in a vast country of striking and far-flung contrasts.

We may first profitably discuss city life in itself. It is obvious, to begin with, that the city multiplies and impersonalizes the interests of men. We have spoken of the excessive and deplorable habit that people in small towns display of being interested in the affairs of their neighbors (their neighbors, by the way, comprising all of their fellow townsmen). Clearly, this cannot be the case in the city of, let us say, a hundred thousand population or more. The general, rather than the individual, aspects of life are more conveniently observed and are more attractive. One looks not so much at Jones, Smith and Brown as at the unidentifiable, unceasingly active, anonymous crowd. Life becomes more of a large impersonal spectacle than a narrow personal inquisition. Even when a man has some acquaintance with a few of his immediate neighbors in the city, he knows far less about their comings and goings (and very soon he finds himself caring far less) than a community of closer contacts and easier espionage and narrower interests. One may have acquaintances, friends, intimates in the city; but they are far removed from one's immediate neighborhood, and there subsists, along with the advantages of friendship,

a common unawareness of one another's daily private lives. One may do anything in the city and not a single acquaintance know of it. What is better, one's acquaintances have so much else to interest them that they have no disposition ordinarily to pry into one's privacy, even if conditions (as they do not) made that possible.

There are, again, collective amusements in the city which draw the attention away from more restricted association and gossip. Theaters, sports, dance halls, parks—even the general spectacle of city life—keep the mind impersonally occupied with something besides individual behavior. One enjoys oneself, with perhaps one or two friends, in the midst of many strangers. And the feeling of humanity, of contact with one's fellows, is agreeably present without any unpleasant obligations or annoying surveillance. Short of a violent outbreak, no one pays any attention to a man's behavior and certainly no one presumes to act as inquisitor concerning his thoughts. Everyone has a plenty to interest and occupy him without bothering about others.

The visitor from the small town sometimes remarks upon the "coldness" of city people. That so-called "coldness" is simply a very desirable habit of non-interference. It springs from a variety of more healthful and justifiable interests than impertinent concern about the conduct of one's fellow man. In the city, people are usually in a hurry; they have many things to do; there is a great deal to see and enjoy; and the man who values liberty and privacy is very glad that this is true. He can imagine nothing worse than for these people to have time and inclination for prying into his private life. The same remark might apply to the fact, so often mentioned in a sad tone, that the city man is lost in the crowd. Is it not better to be lost in the crowd than to live one's life con-

stantly in full and curious sight of the crowd? Fame, we know, has its penalties as well as its rewards. Obscurity in the large city has certainly the advantage of freedom. It seems to me that the intelligent person should like nothing better than to have others indifferent to what he does—that to live his own life with the least friction and scrutiny would be of all conditions the most desirable. Most people, in fact, do appreciate this liberty of a larger scene. It is commonly what the small town man first appreciates when he settles in the city. While at first he may miss the accustomed neighborliness, he soon realizes that he is a freer man than he ever was, that gossip will not annoy him, nor will public opinion turn unpleasantly upon him. In short, he can in the city live privately and anonymously.

It is not the least important influence of city life that one is in touch with the tremendous currents of the modern world. It is a truism that civilization reaches its highest point and exhibits its most wonderful aspects in the larger cities. Industrially, socially, and culturally this is true. One becomes accustomed to observing and participating in all things on a large scale. Great industries—the unceasing flow of traffic—the multifarious activities of the city expand one's feelings beyond the limits of slow-moving, narrow, village life and tend, not so much by any process of deliberate mental change as by their sheer overwhelming interest, to take the mind away from petty concerns. When a man has little to interest him, little to observe in a large impersonal way, a limited range of observation and amusement, it follows that he will spend a great deal more time and thought upon petty, personal details. The city man may agree in doctrine and prejudice—in his general intellectual viewpoint—with the small town man; but he cannot, in his

more lively modern environment, have quite the same psychology. He does not have the opportunity nor the inclination to indulge the narrowness of his nature; with him this unfortunate theory finds less demonstration in practice than with his small town brother.

Culturally (and not putting too fine a point upon culture, so far as the average city is concerned) the superiority over the small town is beyond dispute. In a city the average man has at least more opportunity to see a good show or hear a good lecture or visit some entertaining place or enjoy interesting sights than he would have in a small town. And this greater opportunity means, if not that he is more soundly cultured, at least that his mind is more harmlessly occupied and sometimes that it is more intelligently employed than in standing on the street corner or in the drug store or in the pool hall and exchanging trivial (and too often malicious) gossip.

It is far from my intention to assert that the ordinary American city is a great cultural center. What I do say is that the city has obviously more advantages of culture—and, to employ a less ambitious but still laudable term, more advantages of civilized entertainment—than the small town. It is further true that the reflection in the common psychology of this greater range of activity and entertainment tends toward liberalism. It does so not as a matter of conviction but as a matter of diverted attention. Closely pressed (or in a crisis) doubtless the city man would display the same prejudices as the small town man. But the former has less occasion and less opportunity to display these prejudices. He is, in a word, for the most part better occupied.

There is one paradox in contrasting the life of the city and the small town: namely, that in the city people must be regulated more carefully and as it were herded

more systematically in their movements—large numbers requiring technically more particular management—while at the same time they have a great deal more genuine freedom of personal behavior, to which the large impersonal community is agreeably indifferent. Let anyone from a small town visit New York City for the first time, and he will be astonished to see the jams in the subways, the lines in front of the theaters, and the manner in which people are herded and crowded; and he may congratulate himself that he lives where more freedom and individual ease of movement is possible. Yet, if he only knew it, a man can far more easily live his own life in New York City than in a small town. Physically, he learns to submit to certain inconveniences. He obeys, automatically and indeed for his own greater facility of movement, rules necessary to handle crowds. But so far as his personal thoughts and actions are concerned, he is, one might almost say, as free as the air. No one keeps watch upon him. No one reports him. No one interferes with him. He can—let us say it with an appropriate smile—even violate the laws with a more ready and cheerful demeanor (and impunity no less) than the man who lives in a small town.

What is true of New York City is true, in a greater or less degree, of any large city. I think, indeed, that the superiority of the city is not so importantly seen in the fact that it supplies more modern conveniences and more varied opportunities of amusement as in the fact that it assures a more liberal measure of individual freedom. There must of course (as I have previously hinted) be some line of distinction made between the average American city and the metropolis, represented let us say by Chicago and New York City—especially by the latter great center of American wealth, sophistication, culture, and freedom. The American city of a few hundred thou-

sand population, situated in the center of an agricultural territory, shares to a certain extent the peculiarities and prejudices of the surrounding country. In the first place, it caters to that surrounding country. And in the second place, it is considerably recruited in its population from that territory. (And even here, a qualification must be made. It should not be supposed that the inhabitants of the small town and countryside, whatever their convictions, do not tire of their dull and restricted life. They enjoy a vacation from dullness and Puritanism. It is often true that they demand from the nearest city the opportunities for indulgence—for breaking loose—that their own communities do not afford. Very moral Kansas, for example, has an outlet for its natural impulses in Kansas City. I have often wondered whether the long-established openness and liberty of Kansas City was due to the more liberal traditions of the Missouri population or to the need of the Kansas population for an occasional release from their inhibitions. It still remains an open question—and Kansas City, whatever the reason, is still an open city in which, let us record it joyfully, the preachers and moralists have apparently very little influence.)

But in Chicago or New York City, we at once approach a vastly different scene. Is it due to the mere influence of size and numbers? Is it due to the remarkable mingling of races? At any rate, there is no disputing that life is freer in these two cities—in the *metropolis*, let us say, as distinguished from the *city*. We have the *small town*, in which no man can easily live to himself. We have the *city*, in which a man can more readily lose himself and enjoy more freedom. And we have the *metropolis*, in which a man can do just about what he pleases—in which both freedom and opportunity are found on a more generous scale. It is true that even in Chicago and New

York City we find people from the small towns and the smaller cities of America—a considerable population that is native and has been simply reared—but their metropolitan environment soon makes them over into real city inhabitants. In a city of less size close to the Old Home Town, they might more slowly (or they might never) lose their village characteristics. But the influence of the metropolis is too strong for them. In a few months at the most they acquire the habit of the born New Yorker and even go to the extreme of being unfairly scornful of their native habitat, which after all has its virtues—when viewed from a safe and philosophic distance.

Chicago and New York City have this advantage over the average American city: they afford more opportunities for sound, modern, civilized culture. True, many do not avail themselves of these opportunities. They go to movies, as they would in Wichita or Oklahoma City or Dallas. Nevertheless, for anyone who is in the least attracted, the good shows—the lectures—the higher-class entertainment offers itself in the metropolis as distinguished from the city. As everyone knows, New York City is the outstandingly brilliant example of a metropolis that we have in America. Today it goes beyond London, Paris, Berlin, and other world capitals in the opportunities of culture and civilization which it offers, for the most part cheaply enough, to its inhabitants. There we find civilization at its highest, for all to observe who will: libraries, art galleries, museums, historical shrines, intelligent theaters, and in general a spectacle of intense, variegated, colorful, modern life which cannot be excelled (can it indeed be equaled?) anywhere in the world. Not all the people take advantage of it, but thousands—hundreds of thousands—do enjoy these things. And any cultural exhibition in New York City

can find support where it would perish at the start in a smaller American city. But naturally, the larger the city, the greater proportion of cultured people we should expect to find. I would not be so "un-American" as to emphasize unduly the fact that in New York City the "foreigners" contribute largely to this patronage of culture. It is enough to say here that as the *city* has the advantage over the *small town*, so in freedom and culture and the more liberally civilized life the *metropolis* has the advantage over the *city*.

And all this, by the way, suggests a little deeper reflection upon that old argument of "human nature." The nature of men is emphasized and arranged, if not determined, by their surroundings. It is simply a fact that "human nature" is not the same in a small town as it is in a large city. It differs in a poor and backward country from what it is in a rich and developed country. Take a man from Village Pride, Indiana, to New York City and in a few years observe the difference in his nature. Some characteristics of Village Pride he may indeed always retain, but essentially he will be moulded (or hustled) into a different nature and mode of life by his New York City environment. When a man knows that everybody in a town is watching him, and will report and argue about his conduct, and will perhaps in the last analysis call upon a community verdict regarding him, it is obvious that his behavior will be limited by that knowledge and threat. Under such circumstances, he cannot possibly be a free man—unless he is an exceptional, indifferent, courageous person. Some men can easily bear to be outcasts, and would rather, for the sake of freedom, be; but there are not many such. For the average man, it is beyond question that the most available and convenient road to freedom is the road that leads to the city. He may indeed take

with him along that road his slavish and narrow psychology; he may even retain it when there is no need for it; but it is more likely that, given the possibility of a freer environment, he will drop his former timidity and join, at first uncertainly and then gladly, in the free life of this modern age. The city does make a change in a man, even if it doesn't make him a thinker, an artist, or a soldier of freedom. From the most selfish point of view, it turns him loose and puts him out of the range of envious, critical, prejudiced eyes. He can if he will be himself, whether that self amounts to much or not.

3. CONFLICT

The conflict between city and country is, in America at least, a new and doubtful situation and not a great deal can be certainly written about it—that is to say, no statesmanlike outline of procedure can be made by a mere editorial observer. Yet it will be useful to call attention to this conflict and to suggest that here is a problem which must be solved independently and which cannot be reconciled with the rigid rules and limitations of our present form of government. It should be plain enough, from what has been said about the difference of psychology and interest between city and country, that people in these two environments, so widely separated after all, cannot agree on the political or practical measures of government. Some years ago, when the rural sentiment had little opposition, the case was not so urgent. Today, however, we have large cities whose inhabitants desire an entirely different kind of life from that which is desirable or at least possible in the small towns or the countryside.

It is even a serious question in some states—like Illinois and New York—whether the city or the country shall rule in legislation. It is only fair to say, however,

that this question arises from the disposition of the country towns and the farms to pass laws that shall dominate the cities. Chicago, for example, does not wish to dictate to the rest of Illinois; but the rest of Illinois does aspire to rule the great city of Chicago. New York City has never shown any inclination to impose its wishes upon the whole state of New York; yet that city today suffers unreasonably from restrictive laws (Sunday laws, for instance), which have been thrust upon it by the country towns and farms of the state. It seems to me that this condition violates all principles of liberty and, realistically speaking, good government. It is not right nor orderly that one great community should be controlled in its laws and habits by the far-scattered rural and small-town element. Home rule is no less important in a nation or a state than it is in a conquered province—indeed, it is even more important.

I am convinced that any other attitude toward our large cities means simply violation of law. The small towns of Missouri, for instance, have no right to say that Kansas City and St. Louis shall have a closed Sunday, without shows, games, or dances. Illinois has no right to tell the people of Chicago how they shall spend their time. New York State has no right to instruct New York City in the way to behave. The genuinely democratic or representative principle is that anything which affects the state as a whole should be determined by a vote of the state, but that local affairs, regulations, and behavior should be settled by a vote of the city. There is no doubt that, in the first place, the small town and country are prejudiced against the pleasures of the city as a matter of envy. And secondly that they have a moral impulse which is not so strong in the city. Yet from neither point of view should they be permitted to regulate in any way the city's life.

The only way in which the conflict between city and country can be resolved is for each to let the other live its own life. In this respect, local law is more important than general law. If the small town and the countryside prefer a narrow way of living, let them vote that preference—although we do not admit the right of *any* majority to dictate personal actions to *any* minority, in small town or city. But if the city wishes a certain mode of life, it should have that right though all the state be against it. I believe that the only sane settlement of the known conflict between city and country in America is the granting of a greater measure of home rule to the city. Countrymen do not have to come to the city. But no doubt they will come in greater numbers when the city is free and “wide-open.”

CHAPTER XIV

Sectionalism in America — Glimpses at the South, Middle West, East and Far West

1. A WORD OF EXPLANATION

I DO not here use the word “sectionalism” in the sense ordinarily deplored—in the sense of a conflict between sections, as between nations. Historically, the most notorious example of this kind of sectionalism is the struggle between the North and the South, reaching its bloody climax in the Civil War, and leaving a heritage of bitter animosity which continued for almost half a century: no longer a major issue—at least not a bitter one—there are still traces of it to be found, chiefly in the South: more in the South, because the memory of defeat and past glory rankles more keenly, and the prejudices of race and religion are more passionately familiar. For close to a century the North and the South confronted each other virtually in the spirit of hostile nations. That kind of sectionalism has ceased to be acute and threatening. What used to be called “waving the bloody shirt” has been discarded as a political tactic. The war between the States has been forgotten save as an interesting historical drama, although the race question still is rancorously with us, ordinarily quiescent, but occasionally producing clashes between the more outspoken representatives of the two sections.

Another sectional struggle in American history, which was about as intense but which never came to bloodshed

—an affair of political eloquence and economic protest—was the conflict between the agricultural West (or Middle West) and the industrial-financial East: as it were, between the farmhouses of the hinterland and the counting houses of Wall Street. Like the other, this struggle has lost its old intensity, although it still figures more or less in political campaigns. It gave rise to Populism, William Jennings Bryan, and the use of “Wall Street” as a sinister figure of speech. It was sectionalism in the form which national leaders now solemnly warn us against: a real, albeit bloodless, war. Today that sectionalism, in a different form which cannot fairly be condemned, is seen in the farm bloc of Congress. It represents special interests which, whatever political sophists may say, are at odds with other special interests. As our society is at present constituted, such economic conflicts are unavoidable. The assertion that prosperity for one is prosperity for all is actually a fallacy although theoretically it should be true. We may wish for fair economic adjustment rather than conflict, but we cannot have it without greater changes than not only the leaders but the average persons involved are willing to have made. We may suggest an analogy between the opposition to sectionalism and the opposition to war: both are evils, but merely talking about them is futile so long as the conflict of interests remains.

Leaders of national politics, of course, avoid or deplore sectionalism because they wish to make the widest possible appeal. Politicians with a smaller range of ambition are more apt to stress sectional issues, State issues, or local issues. The narrower the constituency, the narrower is the appeal—this is a rule that works on the average like mathematics. When a politician talks eloquently about America being one big country and Americans one

united people, you would know even without more specific information that he is running for the office of President of the United States, although possibly a candidate for United States Senator might deem it fitting for him to indulge in such language. When a politician turns loose his powers of rhetoric in extolling the virtues of a State, that is good *prima facie* evidence that he is a candidate for Governor. If he is affectingly verbose about the virtues of, let us say, the Third Congressional District, then it may be safely assumed that he is a candidate for Congress. While if a certain town is eulogized as the pride of the commonwealth, it follows that the candidate seeks the office of Mayor. Whatever audience a politician is addressing with an eye to the ambitiously desired votes—**THEY** are the elect.

From the viewpoint of idealism (which one may be pardoned, surely, for cynically doubting as the motive of any politician) there is an insufficiency in the plea that we should all consider ourselves broadly as Americans—for why not more broadly consider ourselves as human beings, as citizens of the world? Just as sectional animosity and prejudice is bad within a country, so antagonism, jealousy, misunderstanding among countries is an evil influence whose ramifications are endless and ominous. Anything that promotes understanding and friendly agreement among men, the liberal should naturally favor—only he has a broader view than the man who talks merely about national unity and patriotism. Any antagonisms (by which I do not mean any *differences*) seem evil to him: or perhaps I would better say any prejudices, any bitter feelings that arise from an intolerant attitude toward differences: and that which results in the greatest disasters of all is the enmity among nations.

At present, however, I am writing descriptively of

America: and I am not discussing (still less approving) sectional conflicts—which, in a major sense, disappear steadily with the standardization of America—so much as I am considering those differences of habit and thought which still exist and which, for example, set apart distinctively the southeastern part of the country, generally spoken of as the South. In this sense we cannot ignore the fact that sectionalism remains as a remarkable, picturesque, and sometimes lamentable reality in the United States. Politicians (nationally) may talk about the breaking down of sectional lines—about the importance of national rather than sectional political-economic interests—but no man, however little traveled, will be persuaded that in features of the common life the different sections of this immense country think and act alike. In such a large country we should not ordinarily expect such similarity although, as I say, the process of standardization persists and is not altogether to be admired. Insofar as it encourages a better understanding, it is of course desirable. But insofar as it tends to create a monotonously common and conforming type and to discourage healthy differences—the differences which are essential to the vitality and progress of life—this steam roller of standardization, if one may call it that, is an inimical machine. There is undoubtedly more of a sameness in the widely separated regions of America today than there was a quarter of a century ago. Mass production, salesmanship, advertising, and travel (largely facilitated by the automobile) have brought about, superficially at least, a great change.

Even so, there are differences of viewpoint and custom—of the social scene in any section—which are interesting to point out in any survey of American life. This kind of sectionalism is not deplorable in itself, for it is the

contrasts of character that are interesting. One of the worst things which could be imagined is a monotonous common type of American—indeed, what thoughtful men criticize is as near an approach to this “ideal” as we already have. Yet some sectional differences are to be condemned, in that they represent a low standard of culture, narrow ideas, ugly prejudices and passions which are incompatible with a civilized life. One may, for example, affect to see something picturesque in the “hill billies” of Arkansas or Tennessee, but one cannot regard this as an admirable kind of difference which is to be encouraged. One may find interest in studying the commonplace ideas and morals, the provincialism and the Methodist depression, let us say, of a Middle Western community: but it would be absurd to say that such a way of life comes under the head of healthy differences that promote individuality, freedom and social advancement. They rather discourage progress and tend toward stagnation, toward a smug, settled, self-satisfied attitude, toward a psychology that is utterly inhospitable to new ideas. Isolated spots and isolated settlers in the West—no longer wild in the old and exaggeratedly fictional sense, but still relatively unsettled and kept apart from the sophisticated centers of civilization—may have a certain primitive picturesqueness. And one might indeed argue that such a refuge from the stress and complexity of civilization is desirable, for primitive or Thoreau-like natures, and that America is very fortunate in having this desert and mountainous country as a place of escape from the crowds, from the burdens, from the worries, from the extremely annoying issues of more crowded and controlled civilization. Yet, from the civilized point of view, the West, while it may be picturesque, is not culturally nor progressively encouraging. If we agreed with Rousseau that

the primitive is better than the civilized life—if we believed that living “next to nature” is preferable to the artificial, highly developed life of modern man—we might more readily enthuse over the golden West in something other than a romantic style. As it is, one who loves the highest products of civilization and who is disillusioned about the ideal of living “near to nature’s heart” will not be attracted, save as a curious traveler, to the immense rugged and isolated (rather than open) spaces of the West.

It is enough to repeat that, by way of contrast rather than conflict—and admitting the growth of standardization and national feeling, customs, uses—there exists a real and interesting sectionalism in these United States. It is not, in a simple and sweeping sense, one united country similar in all its parts and ways. Politically, we are united and geographically as a nation we recognize certain boundaries; but sociologically and psychologically it cannot be said that we are one. The *fact* of difference is good, since from this we have the stirring impulse of progress, but the *quality* of difference is in some instances quite regrettable and even menacing.

2. A GLANCE AT THE SOUTH

In no part of America is sectionalism stronger than in the South (*i.e.*, the southeastern group of States); there—as perhaps yet to some extent in New England—one finds a conscious feeling of separateness. In both cases the broad explanation may be that these two sections gave America its two most distinct systems of culture. The South has the traditional distinction of having been the home of a peculiar system of society, while New England has the tradition of special, Puritan culture which dominated America for many years and which indeed spread

its influence over the country, though in an attenuated (though not the less serious) and sometimes obscure way.

As for the South, one can quickly become confused and lost in a maze of explanations trying to give reasons for its withdrawn and undoubtedly rearward position in American life. When one puts aside the romantic attitude toward the South, which stresses its chivalry, hospitality, picturesqueness and charm (qualities much exaggerated), the facts are distressingly plain and are even admitted with chagrin by candid Southerners who have been brought into accord with modern ideas and who wish, without destroying the delightful characteristics of Southern life, to encourage the growth of a more progressive viewpoint. The backwardness of the South is of course an old story, yet one which cannot be too often repeated so long as that backwardness remains a fact. Socially and culturally, in its life broadly and in detail, the land of the short-lived Confederacy has striking and lamentable deficiencies. It seems to be out of the main stream of modern times. Old, futile, aristocratic pretensions, representing the empty shell of an aristocracy that was once real in power if not great in culture, are still maintained. The spirit of sectionalism and clannishness is jealously preserved. The Southerner—the traditional and inveterate Southerner—may say that he is an American; but he is first of all a Southerner and he feels about the South as if it were a separate and (of course) superior country. Not that this is a deliberate gospel propagated in the South; but it is a pervasive psychology, a mood, an attitude that does not escape even the casual observer. “Dixie” is a proud, particular and peculiar domain having a narrow self-love and patriotism all its own. It is not an absolutely singular phenomenon: local pride, sectional pride, various gradations of loyalty are familiar everywhere; but in the

intensity of this feeling the South is remarkable in our own country. Someone has said that in that part of the country it is almost equivalent to a career just to exist in a white skin; and in the same way, being a Southerner is held a high and mighty virtue.

That pride, if it did not make for narrowness, would not be so bad. If the South had a splendid culture, a truly great civilization, then might one admit some reason for this pride—although culture has the effect of broadening the sympathies rather than intensifying the isolation and pride of a people. But what, really, has the South to justify its arrogance and self-love? True, the Southern white man may thank his God that he is not a Negro; but that seems a ridiculously poor excuse for boasting, as it certainly does not argue any merit in the white man. Nor is it a sound belief that the Negro inherently is inferior—rather he has been oppressed and handicapped by the dominant race. Even the history of the South, its state of civilization in its days of greatest power and glory, does not from a fully enlightened point of view call for such prideful reflections. The old South of high-living, leisured planters was undoubtedly (or at least in retrospect seems to be) picturesque and dramatic. It has a colorful romantic place in American history. But from the standpoint of civilization, how can it be highly praised? What did it create of culture? What social, political, intellectual or artistic contribution did it make? It produced a lot of windy and ephemeral oratory, chiefly because of the extraordinary emphasis upon politics—the struggle in Congress between North and South. It was actually a barren system. It leads to the reflection that a class living lazily and arrogantly on the fruits of slave labor may lack the stimulus to creativeness. From the slaves and the poor whites of the old South we should expect nothing. And,

considering the circumstances of their life, we should expect just as little from the slave-owning, fighting, drinking, gambling aristocrats.

So, from any genuinely civilized point of view, the old South should not be a source of superior pride to the present-day inhabitants of that region. One realizes, of course, that such an argument has small weight with the average Southerner, particularly with the descendants of the once lordly old families. They do not care for culture. They are not impressed by intellectual distinction. They do not feel that it is ground for criticism that the old South produced no literature, no art, no real thought. New England, for example, really has a literary and intellectual past to be proud of; not so the South.

As for the South of today, what is its cultural position? Ask an intelligent, broad-minded Southerner and you will get a sufficiently severe and sorrowful indictment. It is enough perhaps to say that the stupid, bigoted rage against evolution arose and was (as it still is) strongest in the Southern States. It is only there (with the exception of California) that it has seriously been an issue. More than any other wide section of the country, the South is cursed with "blue laws" and the outrage of a tightly closed Sunday. It is notoriously the region of most intense Fundamentalism, old-fashioned camp-meetin' evangelism, yokel-rousing on a large scale, and successful appeals to the most archaic dogmas and prejudices—archaic so far as civilization generally goes but still alive and thriving in the land of Dixie. In the dismal reaches of Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia one finds the Baptistical depression everywhere, with scarcely a note of modernism for relief. The average Southerner still believes his Bible from "kiver to kiver" and takes his explanation of the world and humanity from Genesis. He believes in the downright

efficacy of prayer, in the direct divine origin of flood and fire as warning or punishments for sin, and in a literal hell where the wicked cease from earthly trembling only to writhe in the fiery depths. He is—at least the Southern yokel—superstitious to a degree that is not generally found elsewhere in this country.

The unfortunate situation of the South is that the yokelry predominate. It has few cities properly so called. It is still mainly agricultural, a land of farms and isolated small towns, although industry grows and with its growth there appears the promise of a higher civilization. (Always the city has brought civilization. Always the peasantry has been primitive.) It is a fact too that in small towns and rural regions religion has a more serious hold. Yet in the farm regions of the Middle West and in the sparsely settled West there is no such gloomy and terrible intensity of religion, of aggressive Fundamentalism, of pietistic frenzy as one finds in the South. In no part of the country is religion, of the old-fashioned straight (or crooked) gospel variety, so preposterously and predominantly important as it is in the South.

It is a circumstance that is yet to be fully explained. One may explain it by the character of the yokelry or by the general backwardness of the section, but this again demands explanation. Some light is given by the belated development of industrialism and city life in the South. It has lagged behind the general development of the country, and offers nowhere near the appearance of liveliness and progress that are marked in the North and the East. Here may be one good explanation for the peculiarly intense religiosity of the South, where life is dull and slow and the excitement of evangelical religion is a welcome relief from the prevailing monotony, relieved also (happily in a declining rate) by Negro lynchings.

There is of course a progressive, modern element in the South, although it is sadly in the minority. There is also a more sophisticated element (sophisticated socially rather than intellectually) which certainly does not take religion as seriously as the yokelry; which in its own circle exercises considerable freedom of conduct, reminiscent of the old South, while stoutly supporting moral-prohibitory legislation for the common herd; and which retains the old Southern prejudices of race and caste.

It would be a mistake to think that the South is actually any more moral than other parts of America; only, it is more dogmatic, more violent in certain of its prejudices, and holds itself sectionally more aloof. Its religious beliefs have very little bearing upon personal, moral behavior—in which we again see the fallacy of the familiar argument that religion is essentially the basis of morality. Certainly one of the most anti-social tendencies—the tendency toward violence—is more conspicuous in the South than elsewhere in America. The Southern “hill billy” or yokel will dogmatically uphold the literal truth of Genesis but on occasion kill his man (which, as we have recently been reminded, even preachers can do). The Southern “aristocrat” may declaim bitterly against evolution—his pride not relishing the idea of descent from the lower animals and his theoretical dogmatic religion making him opposed to science—but he will drink his liquor and make love to a fair lady as readily as any man. Although the South is strongly in favor of Prohibition, it is reported that drinking is as common there as elsewhere. Southerners explain that they want Prohibition because it is more difficult (or they think it is more difficult) for the Negroes to obtain liquor; and the latter, so the argument runs, cannot be trusted to handle their liquor as the Southern white “gentlemen” handle it. No traveler in the

South has ever complained of going absolutely dry. One thing that is more uniformly noticeable in the South than in any other section of the country is the absurd (or, really, outrageous) prevalence of closed-Sunday conditions.

Yet in the old days, before the Civil War, the South was the freest-living section of America, with, naturally, the exception of the Western frontier. It was pre-eminently the kingdom of poker, mint juleps, horse racing, duels and a "colorful" sex life. It is still a section where passions run extraordinarily high: racial passion, religious passion, political passion, personal passion of every kind.

Undoubtedly the South is still to a great extent under the influence of ante-bellum traditions. It has not recovered from the condition of slave-holding days. It has been injured in its psychology and social life by the intensity of the racial question, and for this the Southern white men are not altogether to be blamed. They have taken the wrong attitude, but so would the North had it been faced with the problem of such a gigantic colored population. Rightly or wrongly, the specter of Negro domination has haunted the minds of Southern whites. They have honestly felt that extreme measures were necessary to maintain white supremacy. The attitude might be different had the whites and blacks always lived together equally and freely: but there is the knowledge that the Negro has been kept in slavery and subjected to bitter oppression, and this arouses in the white man's mind the natural fear of the oppressor as to what will happen if his victim obtains power. Fear as well as pride is at the bottom of the race question in the South.

Their prejudices aside, and if one can meet them on their own ground and viewpoint, the Southerners are

charming people. One would not be so foolish or unfair as to say that they are fundamentally different from other people. They but have a different background and environment. They are the product, hereditarily, of a peculiar system of society, of an industrially backward social life, and of an environment made unusually violent by the constant pressure of the racial question. There is no doubt that they have been just out of the main stream of civilization—of industrial, scientific, modern civilization. They have not felt in the same degree the influences of modernism that have affected the rest of the country, or the greater part of the country.

These influences today are making greater headway in the South. One may well believe that this very furore about evolution has served—and will serve—an educational purpose. Industry is steadily growing in the South, and that is a civilizing influence. It will assuredly tend to counteract the yokel psychology, break down isolation, and introduce comparative cultures. It will encourage realism, even though slowly and unconsciously, as contrasted with what may be called a primitive superstition. And surely as modern science and skepticism grow, the South cannot escape their impact. It is, after all, not actually or entirely out of the world. Yet today the South is a part of America that is sectionally peculiar and still proud of it.

3. THE MIDDLE WEST

There is a popular rhyme, "Out Where the West Begins"—where the heartbeat's a little stronger, the hand-clasp's a little longer, etc. The Middle West prides itself on being very friendly, human, and simple. A native of this section will assure one that it believes in no frills or

nonsense. It is practical and commonplace and even boasts of being more thoroughly American than any other section. The most pronounced fact about the Middle West is that agriculture is the dominating economic, and hence social and psychological, influence. It is a region of farms and small towns, of larger centers that are only small towns rather overgrown, and of cities that are beholden to the trade and influence of the small towns and the countryside. Yet the predominance of agriculture in this section does not carry with it the same influences as are observed in the primitive pastoral South.

Broadly speaking, of course, the Middle West, like the South, is moral and religious—in theory at any rate. It has a similar antagonism toward the sophisticated, modern or city culture. Its view of life is too simple and unimaginative. Yet the frenzy of Baptistical evangelism and the menacing perversity and extremeness of Fundamentalism has not been witnessed here as it has been in the South. There is a good deal of Fundamentalism, beyond a doubt, but it is far less aggressive or less sure of itself or modified (mollified) by a closer contact with the main currents of civilization in America. The crusade against the teaching of evolution has not attained such an extravagant character in Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, and other Middle Western States as it immediately reached in the rampageously evangelistic South. It may be that the Middle West is favored by being in the direct path of communication between the East and the West—which I advance as a suggestion rather than as a positive opinion. Here pass the larger currents of trade, social intercourse and culture. It may be said that the South is on the byway while the Middle West is on the highway.

Obviously, there is another great differentiating influence in the fact that the Middle West has not suffered

from the peculiar social heritage of the South. Back of it is no slave-holding system. It has had no critical race problem. It has not been so utterly foreign to industrialism—for here even farming is an industry and small industries flourish. It seems, when one makes such a contrast, that the South suffers specially from its ante-bellum habits. The Middle West, albeit chiefly agricultural, has followed in the general line of development of modern industrial society, free labor, free institutions, democracy rather than aristocracy.

It is indeed, from the sophisticated city point of view, a rather dull stretch of country (not that it seems dull to the natives, who have their own ways of enjoying life) with scant color and culture. Like the South, it has few large cities. Its stretches of open country are almost unimaginable to one who has spent a lifetime in the crowded, metropolitan East. A few years ago I talked with a man in New York City, a very intelligent man who had, however, spent his whole life within the area of greater New York City, and he inquired naïvely (at least to me it was naïve) whether the descriptions of open country in the novel "Dust" were really a true picture of the Middle West. It seemed very odd to him that there was a part of America where one did not pass through a thriving town or city every few miles. It is such remarks which lead to the reflection that a typical New Yorker knows the world better than he knows America; that he knows modern life at its most cultivated and most lively better than he knows the life of the intermediate farm lands of America. There is danger, in discussing a particular section as in discussing an individual or a country or a race, in singling out, as special and distinctive, qualities which do not properly bear such construction. We must always keep in mind the common features of humanity, and, in

fact, one who is convinced of the truth that human nature is pretty much the same everywhere finds himself hesitating to make distinctions and to assert the existence of racial, national, or local traits. It can safely be said, however, that the Middle West has both the defects and the virtues of an average, orderly, commonplace, unimaginative conception of life. Simple maxims, of a decidedly utilitarian and puritanical cast, are enough for it. Of philosophy, in the obscure or the realistic sense, it recks little. It is unaware of the lure of beauty or thought in any extensive, marked respect. One might almost say that this region has in its character the flatness, as well as the quiet productiveness, of its landscape. Its vices are not bold nor picturesque. Its heresies (which have been only political) have been concerned with downright issues of economic livelihood—the successive political farm revolts have been unoriginal and unimaginative, quite simply bread-and-butter questions.

Certain essentials of civilization are markedly prevalent in the Middle West: a fair average of good schools and homes; clean, well-kept towns and farms; an orderly, if more or less informal, social life; a certain ideal of thrift (modified by the modern advertising urge, which steadily turns us into a nation of spenders); moral notions of a Protestant-Puritan derivation, which if not severely followed in practice are nevertheless upheld as the ruling "philosophy" of life. Life in the Middle West, one may say, is fairly industrious, clean, and careful. Lately culture has begun to invade this region, not at first with a very hospitable reception, save in some circles where it is considered smart to be aware of "the latest thing." In the main, this region is a queer combination of the utilitarian and the moralistically "forward-looking": concerned particularly with the practical details of existence, yet having

a marked preoccupation with moral ideas. "Common-place" is perhaps the best word to describe it: but it is a clean, steady, sober commonplaceness. When one remembers that it is less than a century since this region was first settled—or began to be settled—its physical progress and its advance in social as distinguished from cultural features is remarkable.

Its open-handed friendliness is, I believe, poetically exaggerated: not that the friendliness is a fiction, but it is doubtful that it is so much greater than one finds elsewhere. There is apparently more friendliness everywhere in small towns and rural communities, because there is more time for visiting, gossip, and the like. In the city, everyone is in a hurry and there is naturally less inclination to stand on a street corner and exchange small talk. Certainly, the Middle West is not very friendly to new ideas or to culture which has any disturbing implications. It is supremely self-satisfied and believes that "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." It has, for that matter, fully as much pride as the South but it is more in the nature of good-natured vanity than aggressive assertion. Possibly, unsuspected by itself, the South has an "inferiority complex" while the Middle West has not. On the other hand, life in the Middle West has not the somnolent charm and historic picturesqueness of life in the South. It has not the same appeal for the romancer—rather it is the collecting ground of material for the hard-boiled or ironic realist.

Finally, it may be said that in the Middle West as in the South—as in all sections of the country—there is a general violation of the very laws that the moral dogmatism of the people or of certain pushing groups places on the statute books. It is Prohibitionist, yet drinking is common. It passes anti-cigarette laws, yet everyone

smokes cigarettes. It is strictly puritanical with regard to sex, yet light and lax loves are as familiar here as elsewhere. The Middle West is economically steady, intellectually resistant or indifferent, and socially free and easy. The highest praise, in the view of typical patriotic Middle Westerners, is the statement that it is a region of "homes, schools, and churches." They are rather scornful of any higher aim or more subtle analysis.

4. EAST AND WEST

Crossing the State of Ohio, the traveler from the West on his first trip has a view of a strange country. He observes that the towns and cities are more numerous, more industrial, with at once an older and more active appearance. He will perhaps for the first time realize the importance of the factory in American life. And as he goes eastward, city life will take on a new meaning for him or will be more significantly impressed upon his imagination. In the northeastern part of America, which is more simply referred to as the East, he will find a crowded metropolitan and industrial life that is like nothing he has previously known. It is not too much to say that, in many ways, the people who live in this region and the people who live in the South, the Middle West and the farther West are strangers to one another.

In the East, the city spirit is the most striking (which is not to forget that there are small towns within a few hundred miles of New York City, let us say, which are even less modern and enterprising than towns of the same size in the Middle West—towns which seem to have remained stagnant in the conditions of half a century or more ago). Naturally, city life and the city spirit is seen at its most brilliant, sophisticated, variegated and free in New York City—a world capital, comprising a civiliza-

tion (or many cross-sections of world civilization) within itself. There, no one cares what anyone else does. Any mode of life can be followed in perfect freedom. And in a wide area surrounding New York City conditions of life are of a free, intensely energetic, sophisticated, and even cosmopolitan variety which cannot be imagined by the Middle Westerner.

It is in the East (and in Chicago) that one realizes most vividly what is meant by the term "industrial America." It is a decidedly different social background from that which one observes in the agricultural Middle States or in the "magnificent distances," thinly populated, of the West between the plains and the Pacific coast. It is no accident that the sentiment, for example, against Prohibition is more strongly articulate in the East. These factory populations, these city people, have not the moral prejudices nor the simple puritanical outlook that is quietly and rather dully evolved in the small towns and on the farms. They have not the same leisure nor the same leaning toward interference with their neighbors' behavior. They have been educated, as it were, by the rush and variety and anonymity of life in crowded centers to a more tolerant view of life. Such prejudices as they have they can less easily and directly impose upon their fellows.

It is again natural that the East, more populous and wealthy, should be the home of culture. Obviously, it can support a more extensive and varied cultural life than is possible in the other sections of America. It has a more vast, mixed, mentally sharpened, curious and tolerant population who are responsive to the appeal of the various branches of culture. In New York City alone (with the minor but worthy exception of Chicago) does intelligent drama flourish. Here are art galleries, museums, lectures, exhibitions, libraries, concerts to entertain and edify

the people: and no form of entertainment, however "high-brow," lacks for a good audience. Culture, in a word, is self-supporting. It is a general truth of history that a numerous population with closely connected cities stimulates progress. There is obviously more opportunity for exchange of culture. Life, there, is more active, various and seeking. To be sure, this is less important in modern times, with our marvelous means of communication, so that even in the most remote and lonely place men cannot be quite out of the world; they are constantly influenced, though less directly and effectively, by the news of what the world is thinking and doing.

Even so, it cannot be denied that there is a great difference in culture, in sophistication, in modernism between the East and West. Between the Middle plains of America and the Pacific coast, life is simple, rugged, isolated, and in spots almost primitive. It is a land of mountains and deserts, sparsely inhabited, with no lively or closely united social life, no great cities, no easy and intimate intercommunication. It is a region of scenic grandeur, overpowering indeed in their mighty magnificence, health resorts, and still the alluring way of escape for people who are tired of civilization. Sometimes one finds oneself thinking that such States as Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho are out of the United States. From this West has come no great social or cultural contribution to American life, although it remains a natural object of wonder, romantic curiosity, and pride to Americans—a vast theater of natural beauty and majesty unrivaled anywhere in the world. The old West, it is true, supplied America with its greatest body of romantic and legendary material; but that "Wild West" (so greatly exaggerated and freely used by facile fictionists of superficial style) no longer exists—although it has not become sophisticated,

settled largely, nor civilized in the sense of an artificial, highly ornamented life. Utah is interesting to a degree because of its history as a Mormon commonwealth; but Mormonism did not affect American life as a whole—it was an isolated extravaganza, scarcely real.

One would expect the West to be more individualistic than any other part of the country. Socially it is simpler and freer even than the democratic Middle West. Intellectually, it seems to have the average American ideas. It is chiefly interesting (to the rest of America at any rate) as a land of romance, immensity, strangeness, and scenic wonder. There is no culture of this West that commands attention and arouses discussion as, say, the culture of the South or the Middle West. For those who like to "rough it," to live with a sort of primitive freedom, and to deal adventurously with nature, the West still does and for a long time will retain its unique attractiveness.

On the Pacific coast, civilization—using the term to imply a thriving, settled social life—is observed, save for certain differences of the natural scene, in familiar American style. The Pacific coast has one really civilized city—San Francisco. Los Angeles and southern California for the most part show us Iowa and Nebraska—the Middle West—in commonplace retirement. Contrary to what one hears sometimes about the free atmosphere of the Pacific coast, the record shows that California and Washington are two of the most unfriendly States with regard to radical thought and modern culture. California especially is a very hotbed of reactionary sentiment. Perhaps it is just as well to say that the Pacific coast is typically American, with emphasis on the Middle Western psychology. And of course, while "typical Americanism" seems at times quite vague and indeterminate, there is a certain broad similarity among all the sections of this immense

America; an individualism, a hustling spirit, a cocksureness, a self-conscious morality (not very well followed in practice), a patriotism; practically the same sentiments are impressed upon the people in all sections—general sentiments—yet the special differences are interesting and not a little intriguing.

CHAPTER XV

Culture in America Is Growing, With Overtones of a Higher, More Intellectual Civilization

1. THE PROGRESS OF THOUGHT

If one starts with America at the moment it became a separate government resolved to pursue its own destiny, one is likely to reflect that there was a fair promise of intellectual freedom and curiosity which was strangely unfulfilled. The men who founded the American government—most of them or the greatest ones—were men of fine intellectual powers and a wide range of intellectual interests. They were chiefly interested in social and political questions, but they did not confine themselves to such practical matters. They speculated freely on religion, on human nature, on life generally and were, in the best sense of the word, men of culture. It was, to be sure, a period of intense and daring speculation in Europe—in England and France—and Americans of active and wide-awake minds could hardly escape that influence. Their own situation inclined them strongly to sympathy with ideas, political and religious, that defined and strengthened the cause of liberty. They were, even so, only individuals, the intellectual as they were the social aristocracy of the time. They were individuals too whose independence and brilliancy were peculiarly called forth by the circumstances. They did not represent the intellectual or cultural tone of their countrymen nor of any considerable body of their countrymen. Their religious opinions

they kept on the whole pretty discreetly to themselves—they might talk freely among themselves, but they did not disturb the faith of the people. As for their social-political ideas, they were comprehended by the people only in the most superficial, simple and dogmatic way. Their genius was in statesmanship and not in spreading intellectual light among the crude, isolated population of a new country. And of course neither the people nor the position of America was then such as to encourage any life of culture.

And what was the inspiration of character and custom from which the colonies, in 1776, might have been expected to derive anything like a free and bold culture? There was none. There was a brief period of intellectual brilliance, chiefly directed toward the stern necessities of revolution and the formation of a new government. Before that there was on the one hand the gloomy, narrow influence of Puritanism and on the other hand the shiftless, idle, high-and-fast living regime of the cavalier South. It is customary among liberal writers to eulogize the Cavaliers in contrast with the Puritans—the ardent spirit of the Southern colonists as against the narrow, repressive spirit (though fierce enough in its flagellating conscience) of the New England colonists. I own that the former are a good deal more attractive to me. Yet we must guard against exaggeration. The Cavaliers were certainly not cultured in the fine, broad and thoughtful sense which we mean. They simply enjoyed life more, that is all, and so far, so good, indeed. They were not artistic, they were not bothered about ideas, they had not the spirit of progress. It might be said that the Puritans had purpose without the feeling of nature, while the Cavaliers had the feeling of nature without purpose. It was unattractively, intolerably narrow—this Puritan sense of duty and purpose—but at any rate, refined and broadened, it

did create in time the culture represented by Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and the New England school. The Southern Americans (those who had the leisure and wealth for culture) simply had a life of elegance and pleasure and spouted politics grandiloquently.

Politics and morality absorbed the mental energies of the growing nation. Thought, either of a realistic or metaphysical kind, was largely a field of indifference and even of unawareness. America did not have—it was long before it would have to any extent—a literature of ideas. Such a literature, peculiar and narrow and short-lived, did appear in New England toward the middle of the nineteenth century. It does not seem, to the modern realist, nearly as satisfactory nor as sensible as the thought of the more skeptical, more worldly-wise Revolutionary leaders. Emerson was its most illustrious prophet. He preached (one always thinks of him as peculiarly a preacher) a philosophy that had little or no contact with the actualities of American life. It was an esoteric, transcendental message. It was on the whole cloudy, vaporous, futile—certainly it was so from the realistic viewpoint. It may be said that Emerson was American in that he was moral and inspirational, qualities which on a much lower plane are the stock in trade of commonplace American "literature" (mostly ephemeral) that makes a pretense of thoughtfulness and wisdom. The influence of Emerson and Thoreau is limited (even today) to a few students and enthusiasts.

In looking over American history, one is not impressed by its literature, or philosophy, or active movements of intellectual life. What impresses one is political struggle, economic issues, the conquering of new frontiers, the strenuous, unthinking, physical development of a new continent. One is impressed too by the enormous, heavy, thought-crippling power of religion in American life. Not

that the country was at any time a nation of saints or ascetics, but that it was conventionally a nation of believers, who, by the firmness and incuriosity of their belief, precluded the possibility of original, searching thought. So long as a country is mentally dominated by a dogmatic religion—so long as the pulpit sends forth the accepted message of righteousness and of all wisdom that man needs in earth or heaven—the thinking life of that country is at a standstill.

Thus we come to the view that skepticism is the stimulus necessary to the progress of thought. And what, indeed, is thinking but questioning? When men accept what they are told on faith and without inquiry, they do not think; when the leaders of a country (I mean those who are supposed to mould though probably they only reflect the opinions of a country) utter nothing but stale though sacredly regarded commonplaces—or narrow, unimaginative homilies on duty and virtue—or platitudes that are not worth repeating, there is no need to look for intellectual animation, brilliancy and progress. And of course it is also true that a people who are enormously preoccupied with the business of building, expanding, laying the foundations and creating the forms of a society on virgin soil, so to speak, are not apt to reflect much upon the problems of life, the truth of ideas, the history of institutions and the more significant implications of their own behavior individually or socially. Here and there a few scholars have worked finely in special fields. The practical needs of our industrial civilization have encouraged a remarkable work in science, particularly in its profitable aspects. But we have had no large group of powerful and original thinkers, such as France had in the eighteenth century. What America has needed, indeed, has been a good shaking up—the work of iconoclasm, clearing the

ground—in short a debunking before it could have an intellectual life at once critical and serene.

A great deal is said about the belligerence, the sharp positive tone, of American debunking in these latter years of lively, clashing thought. It is far from a fair criticism. The fact is that debunking for the most part has been gay, satirical, humorous, irreverent if you will. Yet obviously the fighting, hard-hitting style is necessary—it is inevitable—to stimulate intellectual life, or interest in ideas, in a nation that has been sunk in orthodoxy and concerned only with unthinking action. From Ingersoll to Mencken, and especially within the past fifteen years, iconoclasm has been the boldest and brightest feature of intellectual life in America, hammering away at American smugness, orthodoxy and obscurantism, calling for a civilized, full-grown attention to ideas and culture. It has been done, as I say, humorously and from a lofty point of view. Associating itself with the historic spirit of freedom, culture and intellectual life, it is infinitely broader than the conventional, commonplace thought which it has challenged. And nothing could be more ridiculous than the charge, made by the upholders of orthodoxy, that this iconoclasm is narrow. If it has apparent aspects of narrowness, that is because of its sharp concentration upon certain issues—issues that must be dealt with in precisely such a manner. But when one considers the sources from which this iconoclasm, intellectually, draws its strength, one perceives that it is historically as well as contemporaneously significant. It has done gallant and effective work, and while there is still plenty of need for it (especially in view of the menace of Fundamentalism), one already sees a change in the intellectual atmosphere of America.

It has been said that only the growth of skepticism—in religion, in literature, in politics, in behaviorism—could

jar the mental indifference of the country and produce a real activity of thought. And this indeed is what has happened. The skeptical, inquiring, culture-seeking attitude has grown remarkably in America during the past fifteen years and has resulted in a wide movement of ideas—an intellectual shaking up and looking around—which is, certainly in extent and significance, a new thing in our country's life. True, the majority of Americans are still limited, platonian, herd-like in their mental processes. One cannot picture any vast, revolutionary movement of enlightenment that has swept through the country. Conservatism rules. At best the average man cannot get past the obvious, and too often he overlooks or incorrectly apprehends the obvious. Some of his most cherished beliefs should, it would seem, be easily corrected by a glance at the obvious facts of life.

Even so, there are several encouraging features of the time. Some modifications have occurred in the beliefs of average Americans—they are not so hopelessly sunk in provincialism, Puritanism, and a queer patch-work of left-over medievalism. They are—large numbers of average Americans—at least familiar with and they more commonly discuss ideas which were unsuspected a half century ago. And the number of Americans who are genuinely in accord with the spirit of modernism, who really are interested in the broadest life of culture and the most independent, challenging activities of thought, is undoubtedly on the increase. These thinking Americans have increased, they are more articulate, and they are addressed by an unusual group of well-equipped, free-thinking writers, who approach life from an entirely different viewpoint from that of the older, conventional writers. It is a point of view that is essentially realistic, although not limited to the “practical” concerns which have been the almost ex-

clusive interest of the American mind nor dominated by the narrow moral sense which is unfavorable to any wide-ranging freedom and curiosity of thought. We have had no other period in American life when ideas have been so extensively, vigorously and freely dealt with. Emersonian transcendentalism did not attract even such popular attention, and it was, anyway, something for obscure inner contemplation rather than definite, lively application to the visible world, even among its devotees.

One could not draw a highly colored, optimistic picture of the intellectual life of America today, but it is advanced beyond anything known in the older America. And cultural movements, after all, are confined to a minority in their fully comprehended significance. In time they may affect the majority emotionally, if they are helped by social conditions—for example, it was a minority who entered into the philosophic movement in France, the movement for liberalism and human rights, out of which issued the Revolution, but the people, stirred by social conditions, seized emotionally upon the idea of the rights of man. The hopeful fact is that we have a conscious, considerable minority of liberal—even iconoclastic—opinion. Those of us who are interested in ideas have contacts and an audience that we never had before. We can see unmistakably a real progress of thought in America, and it may be—there is good reason to think that it is—the beginning of a higher, more intellectual and more sophisticated civilization.

2. ART IN AMERICA

This will not be a technical or expert discussion of the various arts, as they are latterly exhibited in America. Such a discussion would be presumptuous on my part and, anyway, does not fit my purpose. It is enough to consider

in a general way what progress America has shown in the artistic life, and especially in the spread of an appreciation for beautiful and artistic things, for what is called the finer side of life, among the people.

We may broadly define art as the impulse to render the aspects of life in harmonious, significant, and lovely forms; it is a higher kind of representation, or it is idealization, or it is decoration: in the artist it is a product of imagination, in the spectator it is the sign of more sensitive perceptions and taste. "The sense of beauty" does not fully define the artistic consciousness, unless one imports a great deal more than the usual meaning into that phrase; and, let us say, considers all true and deep emotion, all pleasing and refined sentiments, as well as form and color in terms of beauty. It may be taken for granted that we have a general idea of what is meant by the artistic life or artistic sensibilities. We do not mean thought or action or simply feeling, although art may suggest all three. It is, at any rate, a cultivated sense of beauty: a controlled, or harmonious, sense of the images, the relations, and the surroundings of life.

If we glance again at American history, we can see the powerful factors that have delayed the arts, whether considered in their grand or their familiar forms, in this country. Art was not possible in the early colonies, forced to consider exclusively the demands of life in a new land, and isolated as those colonies were. We are reminded that art flourishes most vividly, in large and creative forms, in the exuberant youth of a race. But so far as America is concerned, old races had settled in a new and difficult land, already inhabited by a hostile race. What civilization the early colonists had they brought with them from Europe, and they had not time nor inclination to develop or sig-

nificantly transform it. Their business was with the stern details of living.

Political (and economic) interests predominated in the Revolutionary period, notwithstanding the fact that a few of the leaders had a widely liberal education and were daring thinkers and had keen artistic sensibilities (though they were less interested in art than in speculation, and the one real artist type among those leaders was Thomas Jefferson). Then we see politics and the development of a new government and a new country overwhelm the attention of America, and one issue—that of slavery, or more precisely, the economic-political conflict between North and South—demands the best energies of the nation and is the subject of greatest popular interest. It is apparent indeed that America could not possibly have found herself as a nation until after the Civil War.

Before the Civil War, it might be said that only one section of America had a civilization or a social life that might have been viewed as completed, as having definitely reached its full and peculiar style: that was the slaveholding South. But that civilization had in it no principle of progress, but rather was doomed to decay, and artistic inspiration was utterly lacking. There was, however, in the South an art of fine and expansive living, an atmosphere of leisurely and spacious charm, beautiful homes, elegant manners, and (at least upon appropriate occasions) costumes that had a fine flourish. It can be said that the art of living was very well cultivated by the ruling class of Southerners, but one immediately reflects upon their essential cultural barrenness, their violence, and their decadence—a decadence that was charming no doubt and that was well enough in a certain place and time, but that was basically incapable of progress. The South, with its fast-living, drinking, hunting, duelling—and with its ex-

treme interest in politics—had little consideration for the higher creative arts. Yet it was, in superficial artistic sensibilities—in a love for the pleasing and graceful and joyous—decidedly better than any other section of America.

In the crisis of the Civil War, all the emotions and energies of America were involved, moral and political and, in necessary immediate method, military. That war laid the South prostrate and devastated for more than half a century. And it left the North morally and intellectually lethargic. Yet physically the North had not suffered as the South had, and in the North and West there soon came the movement of expansion industrially. The beginnings of mechanical civilization were made. Railroads quickly spanned the new country. Factories sprang up, and business corporations on a large scale at length made their appearance. Fortunes were made rapidly, recklessly, and the “get-rich-quick” psychology spread like magic, leaving both its victors and its victims. Farther west, there was the rough violent life of the remote frontier.

Naturally, one could not expect art to flourish under such circumstances. America was entirely preoccupied with urgent, difficult and adventurous physical enterprises. Not thought nor literature nor art concerned it, but action and economics. To look for the “idleness” and refinement of artistic sensibilities in this pushing, greedy, practically ambitious, raw, developing country would be somewhat like looking for figs from thistles. One might as well have looked for art in a boiler factory or among workers who are busily digging the foundation site for a new building. Plain, practical, tireless work—that was the aim of life in America in the half century following the Civil War. It has been called “the gilded age,” but really it was a crude and expanding period—a period of rough beginnings—a

period of hectic and clamorous endeavor. Toward the close of the century, industrialism had grown to such huge proportions that it seemed a menace to many Americans. And it was indeed a period of high financial piracy, constructive expansion and graft developing side by side and difficult to separate. Here was, finally seen more or less clearly, at least in its physical aspects, the beginning of a new kind of life. And it appeared to be utterly irreconcilable with the older ideas of American individualism and economic liberty and simple political democracy.

Then were the Trusts—ominously capitalized and created into sinister symbols—denounced by the spokesmen of the plain people, the rising class of factory workers and the farmers of the plains where industrialism had not yet come but where the effects of economic combination and financial manipulation were severely felt. In that day arose apostles or prophets who truly seemed to believe that America was on the verge of a terrible revolution—that once more civilization would fall because of the excesses of wealth and power—that the ogre of “Wall Street” must be destroyed or the country would not survive. It is curiously instructive to read the controversial literature of that time. It is, one might say, an apocalyptic literature, prophesying speedy disaster, fraught with the sense of impending calamity and catastrophic changes. Revolt was in the air—at least in the Middle Western agricultural air—but it was more blind and painful adjustment than it was (what many called it) revolution. America was then, in fact, just on the threshold—or just ready to enter into the full stride—of a splendid, powerful, mechanical, highly organized civilization. Yet, due to the pains and penalties of adjustment, these political prophets thought that our civilization (which they still envisaged as essentially agricultural, simple, and

democratic) was close to a collapse. There could be no better lesson in the vanity of prophecy and in the failure of men to understand the times.

Now we can see how American capitalism modified, organized, and recommended itself to the masses. We can see how this period of incipient industrialism grew into a relatively finished and solidified structure. We can also see how in this, as in every other period of American life, circumstances made the development of art impossible: either creative art or a general sensibility to art and a seeking for beauty in the common lives of the people. The country generally was agitated by issues far removed from the sphere of art; and the makers of new fortunes lavished their money in grotesque, inartistic display.

But after pointing out the physical factors which have held back art in America, there remains a consideration of one great influence, psychological or dogmatic in its character, which has discouraged the artistic impulse in this country. It is a familiar influence, and must always be mentioned, indeed dwelt upon, in any discussion of American life. I have in mind the influence of that Puritanism which, from the very beginnings of America, has crippled our country's culture. Suppose all other things had been favorable, there would still have been that deadly blight of stern, beauty-fearing Puritanism which would have prevented the appreciation of beautiful images, decorations and representations of life. The Puritans, you say, were conscientious, purposeful, and active. Very well, but they certainly had no regard for ideas in a large way and they were entirely unsympathetic to beauty. If they lacked anything notably, it was the artistic impulse.

According to Puritan thought, beauty was indeed a sinful lure. It removed the minds of men from mystic thoughts of salvation in heaven to vivid thoughts of love-

liness and joy on this wicked and condemned earth. What kind of art indeed, could win the endorsement of this Puritanical America? Whatever art it touched, it perverted. All that it could do with the art of music was to form gloomy, fanatical, sacred hymns. All other arts it denounced as lures of Satan, and particularly the art of the theater. Even a preacher who was regarded as a daring liberal (Henry Ward Beecher) denounced the theater as sinful and opposed all organized, public pleasures on Sunday. Perhaps we can better understand this attitude when we reflect that the theology of the Puritans (the theology which, spite of different sects, dominated America until, let us say, the beginning of the present century) defined this earth as simply a place of preparation and trial and heaven as the only worth-while destiny and resting place of man. Puritanism places the emphasis upon heaven—although it pays a great deal of oppressive attention to this life—while art is essentially an earthly concern.

Some day perhaps a scholar with sufficient imagination, research, and viewpoint will tell us completely the effect upon American life—intellectually, artistically, economically, politically—of Puritanism: this influence which has conspicuously left its trail throughout our history and over every aspect of our national life. We can only indicate its influence. And far from making too much of this influence, it is pretty certain that we can give only an inadequate impression of it. It is too large and too varied for our ready grasp.

Now we have to say—or we are glad to say—that within the past quarter of a century the sense of beauty and appreciation of artistic things has grown in America: due largely perhaps to the fact that we have a more wealthy, leisured civilization. Take the simplest side of art: familiar surroundings and decorations: the houses

lived in, the clothes worn, the ornamentation preferred. Read "The Americanization of Edward Bok," and discover how ugly was the ordinary environment of American life at the beginning of this century and how, by a skillful propaganda, Bok through "The Ladies' Home Journal" directed a beautifying, tasteful improvement. In architecture (of homes and business buildings), in home furnishings, in dress, in manners—in all of the familiar things of every day—America has advanced rapidly within just a few decades. Compare the new with the old buildings in our large cities today, and you will realize the progress in the architectural art; and this is no less true of the new and the old homes. Despite the eccentricities of fashion, dress is more pleasing and artistic. The average home today is more tastefully furnished and decorated than the most wealthy home was a quarter-century ago. It is obvious that in our personal, daily lives we have learned to be more artistically discriminating.

As for the higher creative arts, we have reached a point in our civilization—of prosperity, of maturity, of greater leisure, and of eager (maybe too eager) sophistication—where they can be more generously cultivated and enjoyed. For the country at large, the legitimate drama has been all but ruined by the movies. Yet we have greater dramatic works today than in any past period—American drama (not to speak of drama imported from Europe, which is appreciated as it would not have been a few years back) is more artistic, more intelligent, more convincing to the critical mind. Fine music is today a growing interest in all of the larger cities of America, and it is even regarded as proudly essential that any city of considerable size should support its own symphony orchestra. Art galleries and art schools multiply in our

cities. Civic pride, too, asserts itself in the general beautification of cities. We see impressive systems of boulevards and parks in American cities which go beyond the hundred thousand population. "City planning"—an artistic idea—has become a familiar phrase. The new buildings are increasingly designed according to artistic architectural schemes, not merely masses of brick or stone thrown up heedlessly. For that matter, in its skyscrapers America has evolved a really original and artistically grand style of architecture.

Politically, America seems still to be moral and conservative, dominated by the small towns and the countryside. As to behavior, its beliefs are still moral but there is no effective control—the younger generation, for example, defy at will the precepts of the older generation. But artistically—in its sense of beauty—America has departed from the drab, dogmatic standards of the Puritans. A sensitive appreciation of beautiful form, color, and feeling has finally asserted itself independently in this country and it is growing. We are—Americans as a whole are—less apt to confuse beauty with sin. We want to enjoy life, and one of the best ways to enjoy life is through the forms and colors of beauty. Finally, men of great fortune have learned to spend their money on magnificent fountains, buildings, parks, and the like—so that everyone is made familiar with artistic things. What between private and civic ventures of an artistic nature—and with the general refinement of American life—we have a cultural advance in the field of art.

3. OUR LITERARY RENAISSANCE

When we discuss the literary renaissance of America, we include both art and thought, the tendency of re-

flection and criticism as well as the sense of beauty. Before the present day we find a sprinkling, as it were, of great names in American literature: Emerson, Whitman, Poe, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Mark Twain. Aside from the New England school (which, as we have said, was unique and not at all representative of America at large), these illustrious names in our literature are more or less isolated and seem like accidents. And they do not (save in the case of Twain whose art was mixed with rather crude buffooneries and striving for popularity) make a general impression upon the American mind.

Until fifteen years ago, let us say, American literature was confined in the straight-jacket of Puritanism—was trivial and pointless—was utterly uninspired—and was simply a matter of writing for the popular market. Take the greatest crisis in our national life—the Civil War—and what did it produce in the way of literature? “The Red Badge of Courage” (Stephen Crane), “Manassas” (Upton Sinclair), and “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” (Ambrose Bierce). Only one of these works (that by Bierce) was produced by a writer who had personal knowledge of the Civil War. The two others were the products of young writers, who were influenced, a quarter of a century later, by the dawning impulse of realism and literary independence. Chiefly, the reaction of the great struggle between the States was in the style of superficial romance: tales of Northern soldiers who loved Southern women or *vice versa*: melodrama with hardly even the excuse of clever technique, for all these romances were alike: stuff of battles related in a dull formula. In technically conforming to a certain style, many of these books were productions of a certain skill. What they lacked was imagination, life, reality. They were no more than stale patterns and echoes.

Take the elder literature of America. Irving was an English imitator, Hawthorne (as indeed the whole New England school) was a somber mystic, Poe was independent of time or place, Whitman was scandalously at odds with the American mind, and Mark Twain was a mixture of the mere buffoon and the universal satirist, misunderstood or condemned in his more significant attitude. To the beginning of the present century, American literature was narrow and commonplace and repetitive and dull indeed.

Then came a few pioneers of realism, of the independent literary art—Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser. They pointed the direction which a mature civilization must take, in a literary sense. Yet at the beginning of the century America was by no means receptive to new standards of literature—or to a resurrection and new application of the best old standards. Because his work was thought to be somehow patriotic, Crane had a brilliant brief success. Political (economic) reasons made the fame of Frank Norris in "The Octopus." But Dreiser who had neither patriotic nor political motives—who was an unterrified, unmoral realist—felt the full force of Puritanical public opinion. His early novels were betrayed (by publishers), censored, and damned. He was considered a menace to all that the older America held dear and true. He was too slightly impressed by conventional moral values, too unmorally (scientifically) interested in the dissection of psychology. With Dreiser character, not morals in a superficial sense, was the intriguing subject. But Dreiser, at any rate, has lived to see the vindication of his theory (if not his style) of fiction and to see himself become a best seller, with hundreds of thousands of newly emancipated Americans rushing to get

his "American Tragedy," where only a few years ago his "Sister Carrie" was anathema.

Today—such is the breadth of emancipation in our literature—scarcely anything is barred to the American novelist, poet, essayist, dramatist. In fact, the more daring his theme, the more is his work talked about, written about, and sold. It seems that literature has really broken down the barriers of Puritanism. No longer must the writer confine himself to the old, sentimental, unreal tales. The literary artist's domain (which must indeed be as wide as the world and all of nature) has been extended almost incredibly in this historically Puritan America. Nothing is forbidden—as indeed nothing should be. We have the phenomenon, for example (which would have been impossible fifteen or twenty years ago) of Bromfield's "A Good Woman"—keen, relentless satire on religion and morality, sex, patriotism, American heroes, all treated very boldly and freely in the new literature. Within twenty years Mencken has developed from an obscure unpatriotic critic into at least a popularly read and discussed trafficker with interesting ideas. Sinclair Lewis has heaped satire upon the American civilization, and he has been widely read and discussed by the objects of his satire. Upton Sinclair has advanced from the position of merely a Socialist propagandist to an important place in American literature which he has not occupied since the sensational appearance of "The Jungle"—and the difference today is that he is more respected and finds a more intelligently sympathetic audience.

As I have repeatedly said, I have no illusions about the enlightenment of the vast majority who inhabit American civilization. I know very well that commonplace ideas still govern in this country, and that this culture—this growth of thought and art—concerning which I

speak, is confined to what is, after all, a minority. But this minority grows. It is spread over the forty-eight States. Its influence is not idle, but pervasive. And, as Omar Khayyam, I believe, wrote long ago, "a little leaven leaveneth the lump." Personally, I have great hopes of culture in America. I believe that we have at last reached the adult stage, which will of course mean adjustments and controversies, but will in the long run assure us a greater level of civilization. In art, in literature, and in thought generally America is far ahead of any previous time—and the future of America (as of the world) I should say will be governed by the spirit of liberalism and freedom.

CHAPTER XVI

Journalism in America Is a Standardized Machine and a Popular Show

1. THE NEWSPAPER MACHINE

THE newspaper seems more romantic from the outside. Actually, it is a huge impersonal business machine, the main body of its workers being slaves of routine. The effects of standardization are nowhere more clearly seen. Wherever one goes in America, one reads (with a few minor differences and local allusions) practically the same newspaper. There are the same comic strips, the same syndicated features, the same dry, level editorial tone, the same policy of conservatism (for while the "yellow" journals may have an unconservative luridness of style, they are essentially conservative in policy; and, anyway, sensationalism just about rules the roost in American journalism today—one can't escape it). The difference in general policy and style between a Democratic and a Republican newspaper is not sharp nor striking—it is superficial and in all essentials, as it were, our newspapers agree.

Primarily, they are business institutions and their chief business is not, as ostensibly appears, the circulation of news but of advertising. To use a much abused word, yet one that is accurate enough, they are capitalistic through and through. They have the capitalistic-corporation spirit, interests, and aims. True, they must sell news and entertainment to a large number of readers or they cannot sell advertising; but the sale of advertising is their

carefully considered business first and last, and this determines their attitude both generally and specially. It is partly the strongly impressed realization of this economic determinism—as well as their contact with the seamy side of life—which makes cynics of most newspaper men. These workers at the standardized and unfree trade of journalism quickly lose any illusions they may have when they enter upon their career.

No feature of American life has changed more—perhaps none has changed so much—in the last fifty years. Journalism is at once more efficient and far less picturesque, personal, and independent. Recall some of the great names of the older American journalism: Dana, Greeley, Watterson, Bowles, Grady, Nelson. Those men were both writers and editors. They had style and individuality impressed definitely upon their newspapers. They had a spirit of independence and of journalistic art, let us say, which one does not observe today, or rarely—almost anachronistically—if at all. They could use, on occasion, strong and free language. They could dare to take sides, as a matter of conviction, without studying too timorously the result in popularity. That point, of course, should not be exaggerated, nor should those earlier leaders of journalism be represented as utterly bold, iconoclastic crusaders. Fundamentally, they had the same emotions and ideas as the American public. But on particular occasions, they could apply those ideas more courageously and consistently than is the practice nowadays. Greeley was not afraid to make bitter enemies by his early and persistent fight against slavery, and freely vented his often disconcerting personal opinions. Dana—at heart a cynic—wrote with a freedom and pungency that no editor of a daily newspaper would attempt today. Watterson always wrote what he pleased and never tempered his phrases to polite

sensibilities. Bowles was a liberal, a humanist, and no slave to any interest. Journalism was not simply a trade to those men—it was an art and a means of self-expression. Take one example: no editor today would be so outspoken concerning the scandal involving an eminent preacher (Henry Ward Beecher) as were Dana and Watterson, both of whom not only printed fully the news of the case but, thoroughly convinced of the preacher's guilt, declared their conviction plainly in editorials. And it should be remembered that the clergy were a more important force then than they are now.

It was, undoubtedly, a time of more decisive and independent editorial control, more conviction, more personality. There was also more adventure in newspaper life as a whole, a freer atmosphere, a more stimulating rivalry and distinction among newspapers, a wider range both of policy and style. It was then that journalism was spoken of affectionately as "a game"—a game in which there was real chance, allurement, and appeal to individuality. Newspapers—at least the better ones—could be more truly called moulders of public opinion rather than mere caterers to public opinion and taste. Now the personal note has all but disappeared from our journalism and the old independence (closely associated with that personal note and, to be sure, a relative independence) is not perceptible in our present newspapers.

The signed, syndicated feature articles which are familiar today cannot be counted as personal journalism. It has no vivid stamp of personality—this syndicated stuff—nor is it anything but, let us say, journalistic vaudeville. It is all of a piece and it is the standardized daily entertainment of newspaper readers in every part of the country. When I say it is all of a piece, I mean that in each department—in its humor, in its moralizing, in its jingles,

in its word-puzzle and question games, in its New York day-by-day curiosities, in its oddities of information that are of very doubtful importance—it is thoroughly standardized. One finds no trace of originality or of really arresting significance—which perhaps one should not expect in a newspaper, certainly not in the impersonal business-like newspaper of our day.

One finds today the original, personal, significant note—the mark of a distinctive and intelligently expressed view of life—in a few magazines rather than in the daily papers: in *The Nation*, for instance, which most persuasively sounds the note of a wide liberalism in America; in *The American Mercury*, which is impressed with Mencken's personality and carries a message of skepticism and cultured appreciation that one would not think of looking for in the newspaper; and—if I may say so—in the Haldeman-Julius publications, which are certainly free from the fetters of conventionalism or of policy dictated by advertising. There is of course Heywood Broun who for long gave a fine personal touch to the New York *World* and who now edifies and amuses the readers of the New York *Telegram* with his daily reflections. But column-writing, on the whole, is as standardized as anything else in our newspapers: although the columnists have the advantage that they need not be as pompous nor as closely confined in the net of policy as the editorial writers. The columnists can have their little joke about the sacred bunk of America—as Albert Jay Nock some time ago pointed out, they are somewhat analogous to the king's jesters of older times. Too generally, however, the columnists are satisfied with stereotyped wit and a wretched kind of punning.

It cannot be denied that in the main our newspapers, while technically they have reached close to perfection,

have not the inspiration of independent life. Individuals are not to be blamed for this condition: certainly not the actual workmen on the newspapers. Many editorial writers, no doubt, are capable of writing more boldly and originally than policy permits them to write. Many reporters could (and gladly would) provide candid rather than bunk-smeared accounts of important events and controversies. Business is the all-powerful guiding influence. Good journalism is regarded strictly in terms of good business. And as things are, we are not so quixotic as to expect any different attitude. Nor is it simply a question of overt dictation or interference from the business office. The newspaper is a news factory (and still more an advertising factory) and it is pervaded with the factory spirit. It turns out news and advertising as methodically, as ruthlessly, as impersonally as an automobile factory turns out cars—with the difference, one might say, that cars have more variety than newspapers.

Like any other great modern business, the newspaper requires an enormous investment. That investment must be protected and made profitable by conservative management—conservatism as to basic policy, which does not exclude the very profitable (and, it seems, the growingly popular) method of sensationalism. A newspaper cannot be daring nor original (novelty features do not constitute originality) but must “play safe.” The reader who expects his favorite newspaper to express an opinion fearlessly, regardless of policy—or to tell the truth no matter whom it hurts—is as naïve as one who would expect his grocer or his barber to be perfectly candid in discussion with him. In each case the well-known motive of self-interest casts a cloud over sincerity.

Again, we have the system of chain newspapers—just as we have chain groceries, drugstores, restaurants, and

the like—which obviously still further reduces the possible originality and independence of journalism. Financially and mechanically, this is no doubt a good thing for the capitalists of journalism—and newspaper amalgamations as well are, from this point of view, understandable. But it is fatal to the free spirit of journalism and its possibilities of public service. It puts the newspaper on a level with the paper mill. The former is a news-and-advertising mill, with conventionally adjusted and undistinguished opinions. It is a business, not an art—a machine, not an individuality.

2. MOULDERS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Does the press make or does it merely reflect public opinion? It is perhaps not a fair question—certainly not an easy question—for one cannot well take an extreme position one way or the other. Our newspapers sometimes make and sometimes reflect opinions. One cannot always readily separate the two influences (consisting as they do of many influences) and there are limits beyond which neither is possible. It may be questioned whether, in cases where the newspapers appear strikingly to determine public sentiment, they are not rather appealing to traditional, familiar emotions of the public, cleverly making use of their long-trained prejudices, with the object of swaying them on specific issues. One might indeed make a distinction and say that fundamentally the newspapers must keep in harmony with the sentimental and traditional views of the people, but that on specific issues they can twist these views—these traditions and impulses—to favor one cause or another, so long as the cause does not obviously conflict with the prevailing convictions of morality or self-interest.

Let us consider a concrete and recent instance: the

rôle played by American newspapers in bringing America into the World War. Here seems to be as good an example as any of the press forcing public opinion in a direction where apparently it did not wish to go. The majority of Americans favored peace and an aloofness from the European slaughter. They were more pacifistic than militaristic, and that sentiment of keeping America out of a foreign quarrel was what elected Wilson in 1916. Powerful interests, however, wanted America to become a belligerent on the side of the Allies. The overwhelming part of the journalistic influence of the country was employed to throw America into the war. Even so, after the actual declaration of war there was not a clear warlike majority, although the tendency to follow the lead or command of government was too strong (all other influences aside) to be long resisted.

But in what sense was the influence of the press effective in this critical time? True, it was at first opposed to the opinion of America at large concerning the right or advisability of taking part in this particular war. In detail, the press apparently dared and apparently in the end dominated the sentiments of the American people. It did so, however, by appealing to the emotional weaknesses and to the traditional psychology of the people. That insidious and magical word, "patriotism," was very effectively used: many people were persuaded that the pride, patriotism and safety of this country demanded our participation in the World War. Lying tales of German atrocities were spread throughout the country by the newspapers, to play upon the sentimentality of Americans. Lurid pictures of the danger to democracy—of the threat of German invasion of America should Germany be victorious—were emphasized until many who did not want

war came to believe these pictures and changed, although maybe reluctantly, their attitude.

Here we perceive that the influence of the newspapers was due merely to a shrewd use of the deeper influence of the emotional pattern of the American mind. If the newspapers, let us say, had made it simply a question of helping England and France—without any mention of our own national honor or of the peril of democracy, etc.—we may pretty surely assume that they could not have succeeded. Or if they had plainly declared that Americans must sacrifice their lives to protect the investments of Wall Street, such an appeal would have been in vain. No, in order to overcome the pacifistic sentiment of the American majority, the newspapers—skilled indeed in the technique of propaganda without involving themselves in heresy—played upon the inbred, simple sentiments of their readers and used these sentiments for particular ends.

We have a problem of action and reaction—or interaction. Basic, deep-seated, long-continued customs of the country cannot be opposed safely, let alone influentially, by our newspapers. They cannot offend the American mind on questions of patriotism, sex, and other aspects of orthodoxy. First and last, they must stick to a policy of conservatism. Whatever their special pleading, they must see that this pleading conforms to the national (or local) style, traditions, and prejudices. They can sway the immediate action of their readers only by catering to their background of unchangeable—or not readily changeable—psychology. And one does not expect, as an ideal course, that the newspapers should turn fully and vigorously against the popular sentiments or the commonplace standards of America. What one condemns in the newspapers is their persistent encouragement of the common

prejudices; their attempted glorification of the commonplace, leveling attitude: their sneering or caustic antipathy to the movements of free thought and progressive change. Here we may say that the most important function of journalism in America is, not to reflect, but to confirm public opinion: that opinion is already narrow and biased and predominantly emotional; all that the newspapers need do is praise and promote this condition. They do not need to change the American people, but only to keep them basically as they are, and to play upon those basic emotions and precepts for the determination of any temporary issue. No doubt, in a subtle and careful and gradual way, the newspapers could bring the people to a higher and more civilized level of thinking. At first a little and gradually a greater difference in the handling of news, in the tone of editorials, in the quality of special features—and the newspapers would be really educational and a force in the direction of free, enlightened progress. But who would be so naïve as to expect such an attitude, considering the business interests that dominate present-day journalism?

Journalism—the business of journalism—is run exactly as its masters want it to be run. Canny experts in this business know well enough the possibilities of journalism both as a maker and a reflector of public opinion. They are quite skilled in the technique of converting popular primary prejudices into action on particular issues where the people, if given simply an unprejudiced view of the facts, would take a different attitude. They are quick to recognize issues and ideas which are too delicate (too "controversial," as it is so often said) to handle. They know well how to avoid policies that will profoundly offend—or disquiet—or frighten their readers. They

steer always carefully between the two points of making and reflecting public opinion.

After the traditions that generally prevail throughout America are taken into account, it must be remembered that local influences determine the policies of newspapers. Take an editorial on the race question: one knows, without any name of the paper or its locality, whether a certain editorial has appeared in a Southern or a Northern newspaper. Why does, let us say, the Chicago *Tribune* express a different opinion from a Little Rock (Ark.) newspaper on the right of an atheist to free speech? Obviously, because public sentiment in the *Tribune* territory is a great deal more liberal (or more indifferent to religion of a fanatical kind) than it is in the territory covered by the Little Rock newspaper. Almost uniformly, Northern newspapers have expressed a more liberal attitude toward the controversy about evolution than has been observed in Southern newspapers. Why? What other reason except that in the South old-fashioned religious dogmatism is much stronger and the newspapers of that section reflect the prevailing attitude? In a newspaper like the Kansas City *Star*, for example, we have a good illustration of the journalistic reflection of an environment. In politics, it is conservative and Republican. In morals, it is strongly bent toward reformism. In religion, it is Christian but fairly liberal because there is no strong Fundamentalist movement in its territory. With regard to intellectual culture, it is superficially friendly and—on points that involve sharp conviction—fundamentally hostile. It is, indeed, a very fair “lookout” of Middle Western opinion. Whatever appears in the *Star* is pretty certainly the prevalent mood of this rich, assertive section of the American interior. On other questions—such as Prohibition—where sentiment is about evenly divided (at

least there is not an overwhelming majority on one side or the other) bold editorial positions are possible. The editors, however, take their tone from their surroundings. The large city newspapers are more opposed to Prohibition; while the newspapers that depend not only upon a smaller city but upon a country reading list are more favorable toward Prohibition. It is plain enough that in either case policy—in other words, the business office—dictates the style of propaganda (let us say propaganda rather than principle).

American journalism certainly cannot pride itself upon being a moulder of public opinion, for no newspaper dares seriously offend the popular *mores*, no matter how just may be the cause. Nor is it the leader or enlightener of public opinion in any brave or progressive way, for it is notoriously unfriendly to innovation, to new currents of thought, to causes that may not be simply, immediately comprehensible to the majority of readers. It does not follow that the American press is responsive to public opinion without regard to other considerations and the current pressure of special interests. Its specialty indeed, in moments of crisis, is in fooling and distorting public opinion. Ordinarily, the business aims of journalism are in agreeable accord with the psychology of the people. The system of capitalism is upheld by the masses, and the opinions concerning politics and business which are favorable to capitalism are held, almost unquestioningly, as gospel truth by the people—for the people still believe in the hoary, antiquated fiction of economic individualism. Conservatism, in morals and economics and in opinion (not necessarily in practice) generally, is the choice both of people and press.

Yet, as we have seen, with reference to the World War, the newspapers can play insidiously upon the gen-

eral sentiments of the people in order to betray their immediate, special opinions. Tradition—the influence of the dead past—is brought into play for the object of diverting or cheating present wishes. We are required from day to day to settle certain issues, or take a position regarding such issues, and we ask how our trained and general principles will guide us with relation to these issues. The average man is not clear on this point, and he is easily led by his favorite newspaper to translate his principles into a certain (very likely contradictory) mode of action. It is, then, in the application of principles and traditions that the press exercises its greatest and most dangerous influence. We all know that principles are vague and abstract, save with the exceptional man who has vitally identified his principles with the realistic issues of life. On particular issues, an appeal to principle may lean far one way or far the other way. Here sophistry enters and does its seductive, damaging work. It may finally be said that American journalism is timid on the one hand in the face of large common prejudices; and that on the other hand it shrewdly—and even unscrupulously—employs these prejudices to serve special interests. One thing is certain: American journalism is not in a broad sense a medium of enlightenment, it is devoid of original or personal characteristics, and it has no spirit of bravery to serve truth or progress. It is a business machine and a popular show.

3. MIRRORS OF THE WORLD

Perhaps, in view of what I have said about the tendency of standardization, I should not use the plural, "mirrors": yet it may stand, and we may call American newspapers the mirrors of the modern world. And now we must look at the better side of journalism, for assuredly it has a better side, not being, as from a Christian

viewpoint one might say, entirely a work of the devil. It has been said that the modern newspaper is first of all—or chiefly and controllingly—a distributor of advertising; but it holds this position only because it is a successful distributor of news and entertainment. Obviously, a newspaper that failed in these features would not have a circulation to command advertising.

Here it must be said that as a news-gatherer and a vast reflector of world events, the modern newspaper has gone far beyond any previous time. This has not been altogether the result of any increase in journalistic responsibility or technique. Plainly, the business of journalism as a receiver and transmitter of news has been enormously facilitated by the modern means of communication. Only a little more than a quarter of a century ago, news was slow and uncertain. A half century ago newspapers could not pretend to give a daily—or indeed an hourly—view of the active world, as modern newspapers do. Local news and local issues loomed larger than they do now. The sense of world interest, let alone world unity, was scarcely developed. Anyway, journalism, as we know and understand it, is a phenomenon of the past hundred years. As regards both the dissemination of news and views, it is a very modern thing in the life of mankind.

Today we know almost instantly what is happening everywhere. The world has become indeed the common theater of mankind. Within a few hours of any great event, we have the news flashed to us like magic—we know what has happened—we have vivid pictures of the surroundings—even we have intimate narrations by the actors in such events. In purveying world news, there can be no doubt as to the efficiency of modern American journalism. Throughout the world the Associated Press has its established reporters, and so also do certain great

newspapers, like the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Daily News*, etc., have their special representatives in foreign countries. There is nothing that can happen in the world which is not immediately and fully reported by these far-flung correspondents.

"All the world's a stage," says one of Shakespeare's characters, "and all the men and women merely players." Well, in this age of modern journalism all the world is indeed a stage for us and at every moment of time we can see the actions and have interpreted for us (in the latter case perhaps doubtfully) the motives of the players. The man of today—even the most ordinary man—lives not in one country but in the world.

So much the better it would be if he could have a world psychology, an international outlook, instead of his narrow nationalism. In this respect, indeed, our newspapers fail miserably—and, one is tempted to say, deliberately. Patriotism is confined to one's country and the rest of the world represented as either hostile or foreign—although our greater knowledge of the world should give us a cosmopolitan point of view. The main fact, however, is beyond dispute: that our modern journalism does make us familiar, regularly and instantly and for the most part accurately, with what is happening in every part of this wide world. We are informed instantly of wars, revolutions, political intrigues, and natural disasters. We are continually informed concerning the manners and moods of human beings in faraway lands, and are even invited to study the peculiarities of backward races in remote colorful isles. Events in China are almost fully known within a few hours in New York City. And indeed the center of America—say, Topeka, Kansas—knows very shortly the events of all the world.

We see then that the businesslike character of the

modern newspaper, while it has all but destroyed independence and, if we may say so, art in journalism has to some extent justified itself in an increased efficiency: it is a machine, but it is almost a perfectly working machine. Ideally, to be sure, the newspaper should have both a free personality, a broad and realistic and not dogmatically fixed policy, in its treatment of news and opinions, while at the same time displaying this highly organized enterprise in gathering the news; but actually, the two qualities do not go together. So for the most part we read our newspapers merely to glance at what is happening in the world, and one paper will do about as well as another, save that the extremely "yellow" journals play up scandalous and curious news too luridly; readers who have a favorite newspaper are simply the creatures of habit, and the difference they imagine does not explain a partisan favoritism—between a Republican and a Democratic newspaper. The more widely read are accustomed shrewdly to check the news in the daily paper by other sources of information, and they write, so to say, their own editorials. No intelligent man would dream of being influenced, of letting the news be interpreted for him and his thinking directed, by a newspaper editorial. Rarely indeed does the trained reader glance at the editorials. He knows the policy of the paper, therefore he knows the substance of the editorials without the trouble of reading them. His opinions are formed by a broader kind of reading and observation of life, and by carefully following the trend of world events, which he can analyze as well as an editorial writer who, very likely, has not only narrower principles but a narrower range of reading and information.

As a gatherer and distributor of news, we cannot get along without the newspaper, whatever its defects. And

while it sometimes suppresses and distorts news—especially in a critical situation where the interests of business are at stake, or in a great crisis like the World War (when the newspapers gave themselves prodigally to the trade of death)—it is for the most part fairly accurate and complete. Often such coloring or twisting as is applied to the news can easily be detected by a shrewd or trained reader, although it may escape the reader with less perspicacity or who is less on his guard. Quite often, too, the news given us by daily journalism must be corrected by other agencies of information. We have learned more about the fundamentals and the main currents (especially the undercurrents and the secret springs) of the World War from truth-telling books than we ever learned from the newspapers. For several years after the Russian Revolution, liberal magazines were kept busy correcting the errors (to put it charitably) and supplying the deficiencies of leading journalistic reports about Russia. Notably we recall the fine analysis in *The New Republic*, by Walter Lippman and Charles Merz, showing the blunders and inconsistencies of the Russian news in the *New York Times*.

Yet, although what newspapers say about their high standards and impartiality and ethics must be taken with a good handful of salt, their efficiency in bringing the world before our eyes must be set down to their credit. They do this regularly, minutely and fully; if they lack art and imagination; if they do not give intellectual "light and leading"; if they have no broad enlightened convictions that are superior to the narrow dictates of temporary, self-interested policy: still, as mirrors of the world they are useful and, when one considers the immense and vital material with which they deal, inevitably interesting.

4. HEADLINES

We are, in these days, headline readers. There is so much to read and so little time. Again, we have our special interests in the news. One man will read carefully the economic and political news—the news of really great events, policies, and discoveries—while vouchsafing scarcely a glance at the headlines over tales of daily scandal, crime, love intrigues and the like. Another reader will follow the opposite course—he is content to skim headline-wise the more serious news and devour to the last word news of sensational tragedies, plots and iniquities in private life (made public). Some readers are very much interested in local news—state and city—less interested in national news, politically, and scarcely interested in international news unless it supplies the thrills of melodrama. One and all, however, do a great deal of their newspaper reading in headlines, ignoring the main and detailed story. And thus they not infrequently receive a wrong impression—for the story is not always fully nor fairly indicated in the headlines.

In another sense, the average reader's thoughts—his reactions to the news—are luridly pictured to his mind in headlines. Thus news from Russia calls up the headline "Bolshevism," and that in turn brings a picture of wild-eyed, long-haired fanatics. News from China, let us say, connotes the headline "Heathen"—a race of creatures having all sorts of queer ideas and customs which are not Christian nor (as if the two were synonymous) civilized. News from western Europe suggests, likely, the headline "War Debts"—thoughts of the nations of Europe trying to shirk their honest debts to Uncle Sam, slandering and cheating America, and woefully behind us in the march of progress. A story about companionate marriage is sinisterly (and seductively) suggestive of the headline "Free

Love"—men and women who want to destroy the home and family and who are very likely fit for all treason, stratagems and spoils. A story about pacifists calls for the headline (in the reader's mind) "Treason"—foolish yet dangerous heretics plotting to overthrow the government and smash "the eternal verities" right and left. And so on, throughout the whole range of news. Thought or emotion patterns, very unrealistic, determine the attitude toward the news, often without pretense of careful reading. Readers do not approach each story or each subject of news with an open mind, seeking the facts first and reserving judgment, but with a general and vague preconception that is fatal to understanding.

And the readers cannot be blamed wholly for this attitude. It is plain that they have been so taught by the newspapers, who have indeed luridly impressed an incorrect idea of Bolshevism upon the minds of their readers, who have both in treatment of news and in emphasis of editorial comment confused companionate marriage with immorality, who have encouraged the notion that pacifism is somehow revolutionary and in some sort treasonable, who have identified Christianity too narrowly with civilization and supported the fiction of "heathenism," and who have represented the relations between Europe and America too strictly from the standpoint of debtor and creditor—not so far wrong, at that, but leaving out larger issues.

Finally we may consider headlines in their aspect of sensationalism. Sensationalism may be said truly to dominate American journalism, even the newspapers that adhered longest to the quietness and dignity of other days having yielded to the dazzlingly successful example of the "yellow" press. Stories of crime, vice, and what the preachers denominate as sin, supply most flagrant and

fetching headlines. And a prominent murder case, for example, will be detailed to the avidly curious public not only in columns but in pages, receiving ten times the attention that is given to the most profoundly significant news of world events, movements and policies. Even a story that is actually rather tame and commonplace will be excitedly thrust upon the attention of readers by an exaggerated headline. Or, even when the story in itself is interesting, an absurdly inappropriate headline will be used. Thus even so dignified and careful a newspaper as the Kansas City *Star*, over the story of a survivor from the ill-fated steamer *Vestris*, had the headline: "Drunk on Liner"; but upon reading the story, one discovered that *one steward* was said to have been intoxicated when the ship left New York City: which certainly could have had no bearing upon the management and tragic fate of the steamer. False expectations were raised, as they so frequently are in headlines. A mere headline reader would have received the impression that the captain and crew of the *Vestris* were on a spree and that this explained the tragedy. This is but one example and, even a minor example, it indicates the general use and effect of headlines. They give an exaggerated, melodramatic and misleading tone to newspapers, whether such a tone is justified by the facts or not. Often it is justified and then we have reams of stuff about a Hall-Mills or a Snyder-Gray case, a beer war in Chicago, or a Negro lynching in the South.

The effect of headlines upon the minds of newspaper readers can well be imagined. For one thing, they do not calmly and accurately look at the news. They are not moved by a genuine, unexcited, unbiased desire to know the facts about what happens in the world. Although to a man of thought and imagination the facts, without jazzy

or lurid manipulation, are sufficiently interesting and furnish the foundation for a still more interesting view of life, that attitude is not familiar to and is not encouraged in the average newspaper reader—out of mere information, out of a true and even artistically imaginative (rather than sensational) report of things, he can extract small interest; everything must be written for him in a high and false key.

In view of these facts, we cannot enthuse over the so-called educational influence of the press. Its usefulness (or its indispensability in spite of defects) we admit, but we cannot admire its mood, style or policy. It keeps the thought of its readers on a commonplace level. It distorts and too feverishly agitates, too glaringly colors their imagination. Its emphasis is, after all, not upon facts nor upon ideas but rather upon emotions. Headlines—they are, as actually employed, the bane of journalism and a snare for newspaper readers. A word—a phrase—a quality of emphasis may throw entirely out of its true place one's viewpoint of life. And it is this which our newspapers do every day, constantly standing between their readers and a sensible, realistic view of life.

One might even say that our newspapers do too much for their readers. They tell their readers what to think, what to be interested in, what to feel, what signs or symbols (what thought or emotion patterns) by which to interpret the news of the world. Intelligence is discriminating and selective. But newspaper readers are not so. Their mental life, their emotional life, and their awareness of the features and meanings of the actual world are all impressed upon them—or by emphasis and repetition encouraged in them—by the newspapers.

The psychology and the influence of American jour-

nalism—granting its efficiency as a machine and its perfection of technique—is certainly not that of realism nor humanism nor culture. Those who look to our newspapers for their view of life may get many ill-assorted, exaggerated facts but little truth in the broader sense, no inspiration, and no equipment with which realistically to meet the problems of life.

CHAPTER XVII

Education in America Has Within a Few Decades Spread From the “Three R’s” to Just About Everything

1. FROM THE THREE R’S TO EVERYTHING

AMERICANS who have lived beyond their middle years can remember when the common style of education in the United States was quite rudimentary and was roughly epitomized by the phrase “readin’, ‘ritin’, and ‘rithmetic”—the three r’s phonetically speaking. The aim of that older education was to make the rising generation literate, and closely (even obtrusively) associated with that purpose, to inculcate a very didactic morality. Where, in higher centers of learning, education was more ambitiously attempted it was of the “classical” kind and still leaning heavily toward morality. Goodness, as it was too simply and narrowly conceived, was considered to be far more important than knowledge: to be the first thought, the continuous aim, and the last justification of schooling, common or academic.

In the second volume (“America Finding Herself”) of his valuable social history (“Our Times”) dealing broadly and in detail with the United States in the first quarter-century since 1900, Mark Sullivan describes the kind of education which most Americans received in the days of “the little red schoolhouse.” They were taught to spell, to read, and to write, and to figure—and little else.

In their "readers" they were made acquainted with snatches from the standard literature of the past, carefully selected for their moral, patriotic, and orthodox tone. They were coached in declamatory exercises (speaking "pieces") that seem rather ludicrous—or even pathetic—today. They learned a little superficial geography and physiology—the former not being very friendly nor intelligent about foreign countries, and the latter having the inevitable moral tone, as regarded physical habits. They learned a kind of history that consisted almost entirely of dates, battles, great men (introduced all too simply and unrealistically), and patriotic myths.

It was a time when America and American education were predominantly rural. The interest of the country did not go far beyond the obvious demands of action. The objects in life, which most Americans had before them—their possible careers—did not apparently require a high or scholarly type of education. Education as a training of the mind, so that one could think and feel intelligently about life, was not a likely ideal of the time. And learning for its own sake was generally looked upon as vanity and idleness—the term "culture" could scarcely be applied to the practices or the purposes of education.

One is first of all impressed by the scantiness, the bare and limited character of that education, which was, even so, useful in its way and better than nothing. Out of it could come only a very poor knowledge of life and a very narrow view of the world. It had, again, the defect which popular education always has had and still has. It did not stimulate real thinking but rather imposed upon pupils the ready-made stamp of orthodoxy. I say this is still true of American education, especially in its lower branches; but there are two striking points of difference: orthodoxy itself has either broadened or has relaxed the severity of

its demands, and the far wider range of actual information which students have today enlightens them with more extensive and varied knowledge if it does not inspire them to more individually free tendencies of thought. They are better trained and better informed if not more originally inspired. And out of this greater knowledge, even so, comes inevitably a more liberal attitude toward life—the thoroughly orthodox product of a modern school is more liberal than the product of a school fifty years ago. The difference which is immediately seen is simply this: that the limits of education have expanded. They include a greater variety of subjects and those subjects are more carefully, more thoroughly dealt with. The difficulties of mass education, and of the conventional influence which is felt in any period or place, have not yet been solved. But the substance of education has been greatly increased and its branches multiplied.

What equally impresses us concerning this older system (if it can be called a system) of education in America is the excessively pronounced religious-moral tone that characterized it throughout. It is very evident that moral notions were regarded as far more worthy to be acquired than knowledge: that indeed a moral of some sort must be tacked upon every bit of knowledge. Officially separated, school and church were nevertheless very closely allied in their influence, except that the former, limited as it was, did teach more that was really sound and stopped this side of the wretched dogma and superstition which prevailed in the church. Yet the school emphasized the pious view of life. The morality inculcated was not rational nor broad, nor was it intelligently linked with the other aspects of life, but it was drearily and stupidly and arbitrarily Christian at a time when Fundamentalism (to use the contemporary term) was supreme. Under such an

educational regime the pupil got very little knowledge but he was loaded with a remarkable baggage of maxims, rules and precepts; he had the importance of duty and respectability and many ill-defined virtues held before him sternly and incessantly, with the thought of "sin" and its consequences (religiously speaking) always suggested.

Aside from the objection that this teaching of a pietistic morality swamped most ridiculously the real business of education—to communicate knowledge, develop minds, and enable the individual to know the world he lives in—it was shallow, even stupid, when regarded merely as a moral influence. It was based upon a false view of life, concealing many of the most vital facts of life. One may even say that it was immoral, with its many obvious fallacies and falsehoods, its large percentage of puerile bunk, its offering of myths in the place of truth, and its hostility to a sane enjoyment of life. Being unrealistic and superficial, it did not serve (even within its limits) as a practical guide to life nor did it last effectively in the minds of those who were drilled in such uncertainly applicable maxims. Life, they quickly found, was not to be judged by such narrow rules: or if they persisted in so judging it, they invented compromises to enable a convenient departure from the rules, or they sacrificed the broader virtue of genuine character to the minor maxims of morality. It is not the person who sticks to a hard-and-fast, dogmatically arranged moral code who should serve as an ethical example. The higher, more intelligent, more character-inspired field of ethics was unsuspected in the moral teaching which chiefly took the place of education in the America that was still extremely provincial, still a long way from culture, still dominated by Puritanism. That older education did not after all supply the highest virtues of character nor (and the one failure is closely as-

sociated with the other) did it supply the virtues that come from knowledge, from sound intellectual training, from broad, liberalized, humanized culture.

It is worth pointing out, indeed, that knowledge was not, in that early scheme of education, regarded as a virtue in itself nor as the natural, necessary foundation of virtue. Virtue was something that must be directly and insistently taught, and it was held to be the major duty of the schools, while the communication of knowledge was, it seems, a minor duty. Knowledge, I say, is the foundation of virtue. It broadens the mind, quickens the sympathies, cultivates civilized tastes and standards, teaches one how to live socially (while at the same time encouraging a fine individualism), and reveals the essential morality of how to live agreeably, happily, successfully in this world. It is far better than any obvious emphasis upon narrow rules of morality. It is the living spirit rather than the dead letter. There are of course degrees of receptivity to knowledge, which is absorbed more readily and thoroughly—and to the effect of a broader, more liberal application to life—by some minds than by others. Some persons may learn a great deal, yet fall short of real intelligence—they have accumulated a mass of facts, but those facts are not co-ordinated and enlightened by any thoughtful, sensitive conception of life. One should learn for the sake of knowledge but, more importantly, one should learn for the sake of thinking.

Even so, wider knowledge, when it does not lead to a liberal culture and an independent habit of mind, does make anyone an easier person to live with and therefore, from a realistic viewpoint, a person of greater virtue. Even the man of most commonplace mind, if equipped with sufficient knowledge, will have a broader judgment of the world and his fellow man. He may indeed have

his aspects of narrowness, but not as if he were without education. Education will develop virtues of mind and character insofar as the individual's temperament, environment, social interests and capacity to learn (not to memorize—which is not learning—but to really assimilate) will permit. Obviously, you can't stuff facts into a person's head and say that you are educating him. But, just as clearly, facts are the fundamental stuff of knowledge and are far better than mere lessons in doubtfully substantiated and dubiously, remotely applicable morality.

In America today education is certainly not ideal. It is far from being a perfectly working system for the stimulation—for the liberation—of minds. It doesn't make genius, nor free-thinkers (using this term in the widest sense, not simply concerning religion but every aspect of life), nor clever people. But it is greatly superior to the education of nineteenth century America, in its range, in its subject matter, and in its critical methods. The simple, limited teaching of fifty years ago has expanded remarkably, both in the direction of a well-rounded education from the common schools upward to a thoroughly specialized higher education for those who wish it. Scholarship has real meaning and culture and is no longer a useless, rare, odd idea (though not what one would call positively popular). A little rudimentary instruction and a superficial moralistic view of things is not enough.

The interests of education have indeed grown so immensely that, beyond the lower grades, a good deal of choice is left to the individual student, who may specialize or more generally liberalize his course of study to satisfy himself. Even in the common schools, education has an academic depth and range compared to what it had a half-century ago. American education has, within a few decades, spread from the "three r's" to just about every-

thing under the sun. Not only have school subjects, properly so called, been multiplied and made more accurate and extensive in themselves; but the realities of contemporary life are brought into the schoolroom—topics of the day are discussed, though not always freely—there are recommendations for reading outside of the regular curriculum—and, in respect of physiology and personal hygiene, one might say that an entirely new theory or branch of teaching has been developed. From top to bottom of the educational world, the matter and method of teaching has been improved, almost revolutionized, almost, indeed, newly created. The bare simplicity and shallowness of old-fashioned education seems a great deal farther away in spirit than it is in time. It reflected a kind of life—a social atmosphere—from which we are considerably and sharply removed; we have at least grown up, and we have a sophisticated and mature system of education, although it does not follow that our educational life is today entirely free.

Let it be said, however, that one cannot fairly expect education as furnished in the schools to do the whole work of moulding the character, directing the mind, and forming sympathies and tastes. Not only is there the obvious fact that the individual must have a vital part, both receptive and active, in this education; but we must remember that other influences—the press, the family, social contacts, economic interests, the church, etc.—are continually making their impression. So if the best of modern education seems often to fail in producing what we may regard as genuine enlightenment, the whole blame cannot fairly be placed upon the educational system, as it has not the sole responsibility. Some of these influences, having a greater scope than academic education, may be liberalizing: for instance, the freedom of manners which one ob-

serves in our time, the spirit which is blamed upon (but which is certainly not confined to) the younger generation; yet church and press and family, especially regarding ideas that have a larger significance than merely personal behavior, wield a conservative influence. Theoretically, the educated person should have a perfectly free mind and should be superior to mere prejudices—but actually the environment makes this difficult and indeed quite unlikely save for the fellow of an exceptionally critical and individualistic disposition.

What is true, at any rate, is that American education today supplies the materials of knowledge in a variety and abundance undreamed of a half-century ago. Whether the best use is made of this material and these opportunities is another question, not altogether pertaining to the schools themselves. Our schools are not free—they do not have the final word nor the supreme influence—but they are involved with and acted upon by the other powerful agencies of society.

2. SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Of all the changes that have come over education, and that sharply separate American education today from that of the past century, the greatest is undoubtedly the increased rôle of science. For that matter all but the very highest education in America until, let us say, the present century was innocent of science. And in the highest academic circles, science had a very small place in comparison to that which it now occupies. We have said that the common education of the older America was superficial, moralistic, and very scanty. It was at the farthest remove from the scientific in substance or style. It didn't teach life—but it taught, as we have said, the "three r's" and the Puritan theory of behavior. Religion, essentially

if not officially, dominated the schools. It was rarely that one could find a trace of true scholarship or scientific criticism or free thought. An ordinary school then was only a little more educational—only a little more entitled to respect from the standpoint of intelligence—than a Sunday-school: there was a little teaching and a great deal more preaching.

Now the situation is strikingly reversed. There is more science and less moralizing (less religious moralizing especially) in our schools, high and low. An influence that may fairly be called synonymous with present-day Fundamentalism controlled the schools a half-century ago. Science was scarcely suspected, and such liberalism as there was could have no place in the program of instruction. A firmly entrenched and ungenerous orthodoxy made enlightenment impossible—the enemies of culture, so to say, held the fortress. Such a comparison is wonderfully encouraging to one who may be distressed by the recent rage of revived Fundamentalism against evolution and, generally speaking, the modern teaching of science in our schools. One should not minimize this movement nor speak of it slightly as something that we may ignore, for it is indeed dangerous and must be resisted with spirit and persistence. Yet it is a fact that the Puritans, the bigots, the religionists are fighting from the outside to get back in and reassume control of an educational system from which they were some years ago naturally and painlessly expelled—and, as one may say humorously, they did not even wake up at once to the fact that they had been expelled.

The Fundamentalists, apparently aggressive, are really on the defensive. That is, they are trying to save their archaic gospel by attacking the forces of modern scientific education which—as they correctly perceive—

must undermine any gospel or view of life that conflicts with the scientifically ascertained and interpreted facts of nature and mankind. It is all the more maddening to the Fundamentalists to reflect that, only a few decades ago, they were virtually in control of American education: not of course in any official or direct way, not openly nor aggressively so, for there was then no need for such a movement. Fundamentalism ruled America and the school system was a natural, undisputed reflection of the American psychology of that period. During their whole life, until the modern age, the schools of America had been under the religious-moral influence and untouched by the disturbing influence of "infidel" science. There was no skeptical, rebellious, nor scholarly heretical influence, either quiet or insistently bold, in these supposedly Christian and intellectually innocent States. There was a God, in school and out. Church and State were separate—technically—but equally revered and emotionally involved.

Science won its way in the schools, and with curiously little controversy or excitement, because it won its way in life as a whole. And the ascendancy of the scientific attitude—and of scientific subjects—in American education came after the great struggle between science and religion, consequent upon the promulgation of Darwinism, had lost its original intense force and had ended in the triumph of science with the corresponding compromise of religion. The introduction and the steady enlargement of scientific instruction in the schools was not the result of an aggressive propaganda of scientists. There was no fight, because the religionists did not understand science nor did they realize how remarkably it was transforming our system of education. Quietly, unpretentiously, yet extensively science came to dominate American education and, when

the Fundamentalists suddenly broke out a few years ago in excited fulminations, the American system of education was seen to have been thoroughly taken over by scientific methods and by the materials, no less, that constitute modern scientific knowledge.

Here of course a distinction must be made. Science has two aspects or meanings. It is, first, the discovery and the organization of the facts that make real knowledge. Secondly, it is an intellectual interpretation of these facts to form a philosophy of life. It is on the higher academic levels that we find science conspicuous in the latter significance. Naturally, as we go upward through the grades of education we find this intellectual meaning of science assuming greater prominence. But throughout our school system today the scientific note is clearly predominant. It has—let us say by “peaceful penetration”—displaced religion and Puritanism as the ruling spirit of our educational system. Some years ago we, as believers in science, might have rebelled against the religious-moral domination of the schools. Today—so different are the times—it is the evangelists of piety who rebel against the scientific domination of the schools.

Yet what, after all, does this rebellion against science mean? It means, if any plain explanation is to be given, a rebellion against facts. Essentially it is a rebellion, not merely against freedom of thought, but against freedom of investigation—or rather against the free teaching of the results of such investigation. When the Fundamentalist attack upon modern education is characterized as medieval, there is no unfairness nor straining of terms. Exactly that—medieval—is what Fundamentalism is. For the medieval spirit was opposed to scientific research and analysis and thought, because—regardless of truth—it would conflict with the prevailing dogmas which were

sacred (and, more than that, selfishly important) to powerful interests. To say that anything, in the life of nature or the ideas of humanity, shall not be subjected to impartial, careful, fact-seeking investigation—and to say that the results of such investigation shall not be taught as scientific instruction in our schools—is simply a re-crudescence of medievalism. Such a propaganda is the dogmatic pronouncement of uninformed minds who are not fitted to have any part or place in our educational system.

What is dangerous about their movement, of course, is its political character. They are taking the position that truth, knowledge, the subject matter of education should be decided by popular vote: so that, right or wrong, a majority may exclude any truth in behalf of a popularly cherished dogma. Still, science is in the ascendancy. Only three States—Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas (in its latest election)—have anti-evolution laws; and the really serious fight upon science has been confined to the Southern States, where education, culture, and the general social psychology have been below the American average—a statement which is not the prejudiced verdict of a Northerner but is admitted by intelligent Southerners who lament the terribly bigoted attitude of their fellows.

More insidious than the downright crusade of Fundamentalism is the disposition of many teachers of science to twist rhetorically its facts and conclusions so as to reconcile them with religion: in a word, the attempt to reconcile two fundamentally contradictory and irreconcilable modes of thought or methods of approach to life—the religious, which insists upon unverifiable dogmas and abstractions, emphasizing faith, and the scientific, which insists that facts should be followed to their impersonally correct conclusions, emphasizing reason and

indifferent to the effect upon any dogma. But whether the implications of science in forming a philosophy of life are emphasized, whether they are made clear, whether they are even suspected or not—science as a body of factual knowledge, representative of a new age and uncomfortable to the merely faith-inspired, mythical traditions of the past, runs as a controlling, consistent influence through the American system of education. Once upon a time the pupils in American schools were taught myths and moral fables and superficial exercises. Now the great emphasis, from lower schools to higher, is upon teaching facts. Scientific subjects comprise the major part of the curriculum—botany, physics, chemistry, geology, biology, physiology, physical geography, and so on. The older classical subjects, even, are taught more scientifically. History, while still corrupted by the propaganda of patriotism, has become more critical and more sensitive to facts. A knowledge of the world, as to geography and manners and ideas, is communicated with a great deal less of provincialism. Physiology has become far more complete and candid, and even sex—that great Puritan taboo—has demanded its share of scientific treatment.

Now, even though the intellectual conclusions of this teaching are not pressed home—even though no philosophy of life is specially or clearly conveyed as logically following these facts—the effect is still decisively different from that of the old teaching. Students have more knowledge of life, and, without any emphasis from their teachers, many of them are sure to apply that knowledge in what we may call a philosophical way. Many will be shrewd enough to perceive that the facts do not conform to the dogmas of faith and folly which are recommended to them from other and less authoritative sources. Today, American education—although it is not ideally free and

has not reached the point where it will cultivate the individual mind, creating (or encouraging) originality rather than mass psychology—for there is a mass psychology of education as well as ignorance—today, American education has advanced appreciably beyond the limits of provincialism and Puritanism and, above all, communicates facts while at the same time emphasizing the scientific attitude of letting facts gradually lead the way to an intelligent opinion.

But let us not be too optimistic. Do all or do the majority of students in our schools follow this scientific method? Certainly they do not. Rare indeed is a completely scientific attitude. Many follow it to a considerable length and then stop. Perhaps the majority are not, intellectually, much influenced by their scientific training; yet they cannot be altogether uninfluenced, for they have acquired almost insensibly a habit of looking for facts which will not easily be discarded, no matter how eloquent the appeals of narrowly moral or conventional influences. Of course, what happens to the majority (of the best educational products of our country) is that they keep their knowledge and their intellectual processes carefully private and, in their open conversation and conduct, cater to the opinion of the less intelligent majority. They know better, of course; but their object is success, one way or another. Yet it must be set down as a very great advance—indeed, one might say a revolutionary advance—that in a few decades American education has developed from the childishly moralistic and the immaturely superficial to the grown-up scientific attitude that rules it today.

3. CRITICISM—WHAT IS EDUCATION?

It may have, to some readers, the appearance of a splurge of optimism, uncritically indulged, when I discuss

the triumphant place of science in modern education. There are, however, points on which even a layman, who does not pretend to be an authority on the academic life, may criticize our educational scheme. I have already suggested that the facts of science do not necessarily lead to scientific conclusions about life, to a genuinely free and realistic mode of thinking. True, the teaching of such facts in a large and systematic way is bound to have a broadening influence under any circumstances, but perhaps not enough to satisfy us—and this is the case with our modern schools.

In the first place, as was explained in the very beginning of this chapter, any system of popular education is sure to have the weaknesses and lapses and obscurities of mass psychology—obviously, teaching a great many persons of different temperaments, training, and interests, yet treating them all alike and in a standardized way, cannot be the same as teaching one person, in a more confidential capacity, with whom one can be more candid and less bound by an orthodox theory of life or system of teaching. Wherever and under whatever circumstances people are brought together in a crowd, the impulse toward truth and originality is discouraged. The feeling of the herd is no less active in the schoolroom than it is in the political meeting or in the crowd on the corner or in the church. The average man likes to act—or finds it easier to act—and think agreeably with his fellows. What joy of controversy he may require he gets by denouncing an unpopular minority. He is never so happy as when he is running along breathlessly—and unthinkingly—with the crowd. Here, then, is the initial defect of popular education, and for this no one is individually responsible and perhaps no society can be blamed. If one society has a kind of education that justifies its life, the same is true of any

other society. From this viewpoint (and while not the only one it is still important, if one would fairly understand the situation) any system of society is justified in its own sight—and is acting naturally—in having a scheme of education which will uphold the interests, purposes and pat principles of that society.

We should then expect American education, even with its scientific character, to reflect the prevailing sentiment and aim of modern American society. So it does. What is the great American idea today? The answer is given in one word: Success. Perhaps we should expand that definition: success is thought of quite practically, even crudely, in terms of money and social position; it is called getting ahead in the world; and it is regarded as more important than developing one's personality, placing oneself in intelligent and sensitive relation to life, or seeking to understand one's deepest individualistic bent and following it regardless of what others do or of what rewards beckon alluringly into other kinds of endeavor. Every graduate class—common school, high school or university—is impressed eloquently with that one word and aim and symbol of all that is commonly regarded as good in life: Success. And there is no doubt that what we may call the subtle poison of success, as a question of getting on in the world for merely material objects (or for material objects most narrowly and unimaginatively considered), has spread throughout our educational system.

From high school to college and beyond in the active struggle of life, the average American is constantly thinking of how much money he can make, how he can win at once the purses and the plaudits of his fellows, and this he seeks in preference to wisdom or that significant expression in life which is, one way or another, inseparable from true culture. Lawyer, preacher, doctor, salesman,

politician—one and all, they study, not to learn themselves or to learn life, but—to learn a trade that can be profitably practiced. Too many teachers, even in the higher ranks of the profession, fall in complaisantly with this attitude. They too are trying to hold a position and perhaps looking for a better berth and income, which they cannot attain by originality or by a fine devotion to learning—originality, especially, being suspect: rightly so, from the viewpoint of the average, for it represents a challenge to the average theory or practice of life.

With this gospel of success, there naturally goes a defense of (one might even say a veneration for) the social system, in all its parts and practices, which is the approved medium of success. So that teaching must not get too close to life in the present day: truth must be carefully held back from casting any suspicion upon or suggesting any opposition to the system whereby men find profit in worshiping the great god of Success. It follows upon this condition that, where political and economic questions are concerned, education must proceed warily, with due regard for the vested interests of conservatism, and that teachers must be careful to conceal or speak softly of any critical ideas they may have about society. Success (the whole system of business and government) is today held almost as sacredly above criticism as the Church and its dogmas were in the Middle Ages. Although a modern teacher is far from free—ideally free—in making criticism of religion or moral notions, he can more safely do this than he can suggest any imperfections or inequities in our political-economic system. Occasionally, a man is brave enough to put himself entirely outside the control or the favors of this system—a man like Scott Nearing, for example—and defy the academic limitations of modern America. Nor is it simply a matter of limiting the

teacher while he is in the classroom: he cannot engage in unpopular movements of thought in his rôle as a private citizen, without calling down upon his head the punishment of the powerful ones who, in the last analysis and when they have keen motives for interference, control the machinery of education. In "The Goose-Step" and "The Goslings," Upton Sinclair has amazingly revealed the propaganda influences and the limitations upon freedom of thought which mar our educational system.

What, finally, we need is a more inspired ideal of education. What, after all, is education in the true sense? It should not be merely the accumulation of facts; nor a preparation, narrowly speaking, for success; nor simply a conventional training of good citizens; nor a superficial, imitative polish. It may have to some extent all of these characteristics, but chiefly the meaning of education is to develop lively, curious, freely thinking and excellently sensitive minds. If it fails in this last object, the rest of its work is, if not wasted, at least very inadequate and not something to enthuse over. We must admit that only now and then, in a rare student and a rare teacher, is there found this spark of real educational inspiration. Most students "go through the mill," as the phrase is, without much impetus to thought or development of character: they have acquired certain externals that may indeed be more or less useful but the inner man has been untouched.

Plainly, the system of mass education makes difficult the idea of an inspired quickening, an unfolding, an enrichment of the individual mind. The tendency is, for efficiency's sake, to standardize education. The individual is lost in the crowd, and the spirit is missed in the mass of detail. The pressure of conventionalities, in school and out, is unfavorable to that freedom of thought—and that

personal attitude toward life—which should be the finest result of education. It is possible to take on a very heavy load of learning, unimpeachable in detail, yet which is not animated by any vivid or free consciousness of the many-sided spectacle of life. Education has failed in its highest purpose if the student has not learned to identify himself intimately with the best culture, if he has not cultivated fine tastes, if he has not learned through reason to hold himself superior to common prejudices, and if he does not realize that life is a continuous and endlessly interesting process of education. And here education does too often—why not say in the majority of cases?—fail. Is it doomed to this failure by its mass character? Or could a freer society more closely approach to this ideal of education? The former thought is partly true, but it is the latter thought that should inspire our attitude toward the future of education.

CHAPTER XVIII

Billboards and Advertising in General Are Colorful and Curious Features of the Age

1. THE ADVERTISING AGE

THIS modern age of ours has so many new and striking features that it is much the habit to identify the age by reference to this or that feature which taken singly seems so great a departure from the past as to serve for a name and definition. So we have, as the mood goes, such presumptively definitive terms as the Mechanical Age, the Jazz Age, the Age of Skepticism, the Age of Hurry, and—as herein temporarily indicated—the Age of Advertising.

The limited use of such definitions and terms should be clearly held in mind. Not only does any such phrase fail to give a true and complete idea of the times, representing as it does only one of the many characteristics of modern life; but regarded as only a singly important feature among a number of others, it is apt to produce misunderstanding. This is not more pronounced than in the misconception which attends the labeling of our age as the Mechanical Age. For while truly the mechanical achievements of the past quarter-century are stupendous, it is very erroneous to conclude that only mechanics, or only action, or only figures, products and details are of interest to the people of today. It should be recognized that in our so-called Mechanical Age, thought was never so free and lively and wide-ranging; and the appeal of cul-

ture is more generally appreciated. It is indeed the great sweep of intellectual curiosity and criticism, the bold mental activity no longer tamely held within the bonds of traditional authority or pretense, which leads certain persons, critically and disparagingly, to call this the Mechanical Age. What they do not like is precisely the *ideas* of our time—the mechanics they are well enough pleased with.

So, too, in calling this the Jazz Age a wrong impression is often created: an impression of people madly whirling and dashing about in a search for hectic, unnatural excitement, over-stimulated, extremely self-indulgent, regardless of serious or worth-while purposes in life. Yet there was never a period when people were more broadly, intelligently interested in life—when they had more serious objects in life (or more thoughtful, genuinely realistic and individual objects), even though taking such objects more lightly on the surface—in a word, not letting them spoil the gayety of things and founding them, indeed, in the first place upon the sound, wholesome concept of freedom. This age is too intelligent, too variously interested, and too highly efficient to be correctly identified as the Jazz Age.

If we call it the Age of Advertising, we are also looking at it in a very special and not entirely representative way—it has other characteristics, other qualities, other methods of expressing itself—but there is an element of truth (and indeed a large and spectacular element) which, if not taken extremely, helps in rounding out a picture of the times: it is certainly one of the striking features that separates us (or that strongly distinguishes us) from the past. Nor is it so much a change in character, in viewpoint, as in facilities. Or if there is a psychological change it has followed, not preceded, the development of more swift,

spacious and spectacular facilities for appealing to the people. Even a hundred years ago (not really a long while ago) communication was slow. There was no such great, flagrant, and persistent pressure upon the public mind as we have today. With regard to general, social communication, all things were in a slower and quieter manner—yet individually men were as boastful, as exaggerated, as eager to make an impression as they are today. What some call the art—what others call the trick—what still others call the sheer momentum of advertising was unknown, or certainly not known to the overwhelming extent which we are familiar with today. It may really be said that the business of advertising has come to life—or has become enormously characteristic and significant—within the past twenty-five years.

Yet it is not, specially speaking, as a business that I wish to consider it: only insofar as it reflects or influences (for it does both) the character of the age: only because it assists in giving a more vivid picture of the very times in which we are living and the psychology of which we cannot possibly escape. It would not be correct to say that the spirit and methods of advertising dominate wholly this period we live in. But advertising is—especially as concerns the general crowd—a conspicuous and unescapable expression of our time. It has many characteristics within itself. It is clamorous, it is also insidious. It is very definite, it is also very subtle. It is sometimes very matter-of-fact, sometimes very sly and indirect, sometimes gay and humorous. But in whatever form, it is lavished and published with a large, determined and skilful hand all over the modern landscape.

In speaking of billboards especially, there is no intention of confining the significance and effect of advertising to billboards alone. They simply serve for a symbol or,

let us say, for the most readily comprehensible form of our flagrant modern advertising. Everybody sees and reads them. Wherever one goes, they clutter the landscape. What their influence may be—universal and un-escapable as they are—who can tell? And what is true of the billboards that dominate the main highways and even the byways of America is also true of the advertising that is disseminated through its magazines and newspapers and books and radios, through every channel of communication in an age when communication was never so easy, continuous and seductively varied: varied at any rate for the common man, although the philosopher might trace a common basis for the whole.

To be sure, in speaking of this modern habit of advertising, no flatly derogatory sense is meant to be conveyed. A great deal of this advertising is undoubtedly true and useful. And indeed the very complexity of modern life makes advertising more important as a means of information. After all, in the olden time the simple few things that any man needed (or could get) were well enough known. But while modern advertising is not to be condemned out of hand and entirely, it is recognizably something very new and very aggressive and often exaggerated, exaggeration running from the blatant to the subtle. This feature—advertising—alone cannot be said to distinguish our modern age, but it is undoubtedly a colorful and curious (even though, from a certain nice point of view, crude) feature of the age. Yet it stands out, and no man can evade its meaning or—its message. I say “its message,” because everything nowadays has—or must have—a message: and even so, advertising. It may be interesting then (if not useful) to inquire what is the message brought to the majority of the American people—and by the majority pretty well believed—by advertis-

ing, as illustrated in but not confined to the billboards which are scattered from coast to coast.

2. BIGGER AND BETTER

One idea which has been thrust with considerable force upon the American (or the modern) mind, not only by advertising directly, but also by the dominating spirit of commercialism, is that everything must be conceived in the style, as it is naïvely expressed, of "bigger and better." We are told that we must have bigger and better homes, public buildings, automobiles, radios, etc.—even clothing, it seems, must be bigger as well as (doubtfully) better, although it doesn't fit us as well. A very scholarly investigator might tell us, after a procedure of the most precise investigation, whether this style of advertising is the result of a changed psychology in the people or whether the altered viewpoint has its explanation in the advertising. Probably the truth is that the much larger scale on which things are done in our time—say, especially, within the past ten or fifteen years—is responsible for a new attitude.

Concerning the facts, as they are revealed in current advertising, no two opinions are conceivable. The tendency of all our modern advertising is toward the "bigger and better" scheme of life. Now, obviously, this is a scheme of life which can be carried too far—which can become an obsession, a confusing dogma, rather than a sensible, well-controlled principle. And the first danger is that "bigger" may be wrongly confused with "better." It may seem that if anything is big and expensive and what is slangily called a "knockout," it is therefore superior; and that the production of such works, in any field of life, is a sufficiently worthy object of man. The truth is, however,

that nothing is better because it is bigger. The two qualities do not essentially go together. Often they conflict.

It is probably more true in America than anywhere else that if anything is huge enough it commands a ready admiration. We have the largest buildings in the world and exclaim admiringly at their very size. We produce all things on the largest scale. We have, for our public events and entertainments, the largest crowds. Nearly all things are bigger here than elsewhere and, to be fair, they are in many cases better. However, in this remarkable passion for growth and size, the sense of values is likely to disappear or to take an unduly subordinate place. In the most splendid and truly inspired period of architecture—in Athens of ancient times—there was nothing like the achievement in size which we can see in the most inartistically built American city. There is never such a crowd at the opera as Tex Rickard could assemble at a prizefight—yet who would compare the two entertainments in cultural value? A really intelligent, artistic play cannot be sure of an audience outside of New York City and possibly Chicago, while the most absurd and garish movies attract the millions from coast to coast. Well, are the movies better because they are bigger? More people read what Will Rogers writes than read what George Jean Nathan writes—but is this a proof of the alleged comedian's superiority? An almost incredibly shallow and meretricious romance by Harold Bell Wright has (in the past) sold more copies than a profoundly character-studying novel by Theodore Dreiser: yet a best seller is not therefore a literary masterpiece. An enterprising lumberman or hay-and-feed dealer may be elected to Congress, where a real thinker or statesman could perhaps not carry one precinct, but only an imbecile would regard this as a test of

merit—only an imbecile or a thorough-going, commonplace, success-worshiping democrat.

The worship of size, success and splurge was illustrated in a remark I once heard from a man who was more intelligent far than the average (at least in certain lines) but who was, so far as this quality goes, what we may call typically American. He had just read in his newspaper of the opening of a new confectionery store, and he exclaimed with awe and admiration: "Just think! Why, they have a soda fountain two hundred feet long!" That seemed to him quite the last word in impressiveness—and one could easily gather the idea that at a soda fountain two hundred feet long absolutely the best drinks must be served.

And this cult of bigness (which is confused with merit) is incessantly stimulated by advertising. You are told that you want, or should want, or at any rate need a bigger radio, although the one you have may be sufficiently annoying. It is impressed upon your mind that you live in too small a house: build a new and larger one or forever hold your head in shame. True, so far as the individual is concerned, the appeal of size is limited: this applies more to civic or collective undertakings. Thus every small town aspires to be a city and every city aspires to double its population in five years, and every building in a city is constantly under suspicion, so that it may at any moment be torn down so that half-a-dozen stories may be added. Yet a reasonable man, living in a small town, might say to himself: "Why should I want the town to grow larger? I like it *because* it is small, peaceful and quiet. Only a hundred miles away is the city when I have a taste for that kind of life. If the town grows, it means simply that it will be noisier, dirtier, less pleasant to live in." Such a man, of course, would be condemned severely as

having no public spirit. He would be called a "knocker," not a "booster."

Everywhere material growth is the object of eager endeavor, while growth in the understanding and enjoyment of life is not given so much attention. Not that I am one of the critics of "the materialism of the age." Material things are important—they are indeed the necessary basis of a fair, just, and intelligent scheme of life—but when they are sufficient and serve their purpose, then other things are *more* important. To do big things on a big scale is well enough, but this object should not completely dominate our plan of life. Values, sometimes logically inconsistent with bigness, should not be forgotten.

Where advertising most closely affects the individual is in stimulating a multiplication of his wants or imagined needs. There is obviously a limit to the size of the things he can be made to want, but no limit save that of income (which can, even so, be stretched almost incredibly) to the number and variety of things which the advertising writer can convince him are necessary to his life. If you haven't the cash, then buy on payments—but in any case don't neglect to buy this, that, and everything—and buy them today, not tomorrow. Do you think that your home is well-furnished? You are wrong—there is always something more that you require to complete the perfect home—and you are continually reminded of it by the advertisements. It is equally a mistake to believe that your wardrobe is plentifully supplied. That stock figure of the advertisements—"the well-dressed man"—always needs another suit. And an overcoat is not enough, for you really need a spring coat, a summer coat, a fall coat, and a winter coat. You need any number of hats, for no man can respectfully wear the same hat very long without a change. In short—so it seems in the advertisements—one should never let a

day pass without buying some article of clothing. Here, too, I read that the man who really respects his position in the world should have at least four pairs of spectacles: for library use, for business, for sports (golf and the like), and for the evening refinements of society. And what a poor, lagging fellow who has only one automobile! Two—three—four—any salesman can furnish you with an apparently excellent reason for having one more. If you have one or two or three bathrooms in your home, is it not quite clear (commercially speaking) that you should have half a dozen?

A great deal of this advertising is obviously not intended for the workingman or the man of moderate means, although the general psychology of continually expanding and not always reasonable desires is suggested not only for its effect upon the prosperous realtor or mortician but upon the butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker. One thing is very clear: the idea of thrift is archaic. It is not so many years ago that the principle of economy, even to the extent of parsimony, was diligently impressed upon the American mind. Saving—getting along with as little as possible—was an outstanding virtue. The man who spent little was considered to be the most virtuous, the most reliable, and certainly headed toward success. This idea was, indeed, the natural reflection of a harder and less productive age. Even so, the prodigal appeals of modern advertising logically are the result of our modern productivity and variety. It is not, within intelligent limits, a bad tendency. Far better is the idea of liberality than the idea of thrift. Life is to be *lived*, not pinchingly guarded and hoarded. The man who is excessively habituated to thrift will find that even when he comes to “retire,” he has not learned the art of enjoying himself. He is chained like a slave to the niggardly habits

of a lifetime. There is, however, a lesson of contentment, of moderation, and of reasonable sufficiency which one is wise to apply. It is very well, at least during the greater and active part of life, to have some stimulating object of self-realization or accomplishment, some goal of thought or action, but continually to be wanting *things* is not conducive to peace of mind. There is no doubt a good deal of rushing about and grabbing which is entirely unnecessary and even, to the philosophic observer, quite ridiculous.

It is not, of course, necessarily an adverse judgment that we are to make when we describe the advertising tendencies of the age. We are interested, first of all, in a truthful and vivid survey of the leading characteristics of modern America. And what I have said about the appeal of advertising—stimulating, as it does, pride and desire—will be recognized as predominantly true. Pride—yes, that too is a sentiment which the advertising writer cleverly cultivates. It is not simply a question of what you need, calmly and practically judging your situation, but a matter of pride in having something as good as your neighbor or something which your neighbor doesn't have. It is often merely a question of display—of being, in the recent apt term, a “show-off.” This term really means a braggart who is always ridiculously exaggerating himself and his position. But many people are easily seduced by the advertisements into buying things only for show, to impress others, and to emphasize their successful position. This explains the “pull” of advertising that appeals directly and, as some of us think, crudely to the sentiment of superficial pride in mere appearance.

It is recognized among advertising experts that one of the very strongest appeals is that of pride. Tell a man, for example, that everyone else (at least in his station of life) possesses certain things, and he will quickly feel that he

should have those things also—no matter whether he really needs them or is interested by them. Tell a man that if he buys this or that, others will admire his possession of it—and it is a bait he cannot resist. Even books are advertised as worth purchasing, not because of their contents, but because they have such rich, ornate covers that one's visitors will enviously admire them. Similarly, whether one has a cultivated taste for music or not, an expensive music machine is flattering to the sentiment of pride. Pride and desire—they are natural and, intelligently regarded, they are good emotions. But they can easily appear ridiculous, especially when they concern the show rather than the substance. It is excellent to desire a finer, more beautiful, more abundant life: yet many clutter their lives with superficial and foolish and exaggerated desires. One should have pride, and self-regard in a reasonable way, but many are led into absurdities of vanity. And there is no disputing that advertising in the main appeals to just this exaggeration and this vanity.

It is, I believe, strictly truthful to say that three-fourths of the advertising that one reads does not, by its method of approach, convince the intelligent person. The thing advertised may be good—it may be really what one wants—but the style of appeal is not credible nor admirable. The fact is that most advertising is directed toward the average, uncritical, very credulous person—and from this fact one might argue a despairing conclusion as to the intelligence of the people. However, without speaking too optimistically of that intelligence, one must admit that most people reserve, as it were, their poorest sense for their buying of things. They are hit in their weakest spots by the advertising writer—which is, of course, exactly what that clever fellow is paid for. And this is probably the reason why writers of advertising are cynical, al-

though it is not unusual for them to have, paradoxically enough, as strong a faith in the product they advertise as the purchaser has.

It is true, anyway, that in this Age of Advertising there is such a continuous and loud shouting of wares that none save a few reserved and philosophic spirits are left in peace. Nearly everybody is kept in the mood of wanting something, day in and day out. It is, after all, a large, complicated, and varied world that we live in and few persons are capable of a selective, reasonable attitude toward it. The fact is that most of us, even those who should know better, are confused by the multiplicity of appeals that besiege us on every hand, by the desires which are incessantly stimulated through advertising. Well, to be cheerful about it, we may reflect that we are fortunate to live in a world where almost every desire can be satisfied. Ask the advertising writer—he can tell you not only how to get what you want, but (and this is even more wonderful) what you should want.

3. PLAYING UPON OUR FEARS

Some little space must be reserved, in any survey of modern advertising, for the very effective suggestion of fear. This suggestion has a wider range than one might think possible at a first glance. It is, really, associated with the suggestions of pride and desire which we have already noticed. It is insinuated, for instance, that you will be afraid (or ashamed, which is much the same) not to possess certain things: afraid that others will underestimate you or have a wrong idea of your position in life. If you don't have that extra suit of clothes, people may think that you cannot afford to buy it or that you are careless and indifferent about your personal life. Fail to buy that additional car, and you may be rated as a man who is not

doing so well in life. Have no books in fine covers to show off to visitors, and you may be regarded as not only a poor, but an uncultured person. In other words, a great deal of advertising suggests that you should be very fearful of what other people will think about you—you should buy, not to please yourself, but to please or impress others. Even the morticians make you feel afraid that you will not have as fine a funeral as your neighbor, carrying absurdly this appeal of vanity and fear beyond the grave. You are perhaps afraid—or ashamed—not to belong to all the lodges, clubs, and other organizations which are considered respectable and the essential connections of a successful man.

You are, in short, afraid to be different from others in your class of society. You have not the courage to be independent and to live your own life. Perhaps—at least I trust and I flatter myself—not many of my readers are susceptible to any such fear: but the number is legion who are moved by precisely this sentiment of fear that they will not make quite as good a show in life as they could or might make.

But obviously the greatest use of this suggestion of fear is with regard to one's health or safety. We are all familiar with a certain tooth-paste advertisement, in which a physician and a nurse are seen looking out of a window at the street crowd and the former ominously says: "Four out of five will get pyorrhea." Of course, the suggestion is that the unlucky or unwise four will be laid low with pyorrhea because they haven't the intelligence of the fortunate and wise one who buys this certain kind of tooth paste. Still, while admitting the bunk in such an appeal, one can't deny that a regular use of tooth paste is a good thing, cleanly and healthful. There is, again, the well-known advertisement which emphasizes "the danger

line"—a very broad and marked line drawn across the mouth. It is, indeed, the fashion nowadays to make people believe that every disease in the world can be caused by neglect of the teeth. If you have rheumatism, a bad stomach, jumpy nerves, or inefficient kidneys—the real trouble is with your teeth. Bad teeth may even cause heart failure, or they may be responsible for hardening of the arteries. Maybe they are—I don't know—nor do I believe that the advertising writers for tooth paste know any more than I.

Just the other day I observed with some amusement another advertisement (this time it was a billboard) in which a group of people were seen in a shivering attitude, with their coats drawn closely around their throats, and the snow flying, and this frightening caption: "Protect that throat!" Naturally, the way to avoid colds, sore throats, pneumonia, etc., was plainly indicated: use Blisterine. It was also mentioned in this advertisement that an army of hungry, malicious germs are camping on every man's trail, ready to destroy him at the slightest opportunity. Yet that advertisement was an obvious exaggeration. It suggested that any man would expose his throat to the winter air at his own peril—that it was a miracle, no less, if anyone got through a winter without coming down to a serious sickbed. It scared many people, no doubt, into regular use of a product which is, probably, necessary only in emergencies, which is to say that it served the purpose of the advertising writer.

We are also assailed on every hand by threats that if we do not do thus and so concerning our diet, we may be afflicted with all sorts of sad diseases. Our system will not function correctly unless we use a certain fruit or cereal to give us "iron in our system" or to supply what is called "roughage." Here is simply an enormous extension of the

old saying that "An apple a day will keep the doctor away"—a saying which was never the least true, and which is not improved by the modern advertising extensions of it to other fruits or cereals. Probably most Americans are more easily scared on the subject of diet—in these latter years. Once upon a time, as the stories go, Americans didn't give much thought to what they ate. Probably they were worse off. I would not presume to dispute the opinion expressed by the author of "*The American Ass*" that the Puritanism and the prejudices of American society have been caused by constipation. It seems to me a very likely theory. But the excessive concern that is shown nowadays for diet is certainly, in many of its aspects, foolish. Certain people make a religion of eating bran, let us say, although it may have no influence upon their health and may indeed in some cases be the very thing they should not eat. They are told, however, by the billboards that bran will cure all their troubles and, poor people, they believe it.

Recently there have been displayed a series of lavish advertisements asserting, with great positiveness and vigor, that constipation is the source of most human ailments. So now we may expect a still more intense, fearful preoccupation with diet and an uneasy feeling that if the apple a day doesn't accomplish its work, something else must.

Another kind of fear is utilized by a familiar advertisement, which portrays the terrible effects of an unpleasant breath. What a fearful thing, for example, is social ostracism! And that is what you must endure if you do not employ Blank's antiseptic. If you are afraid of being left out of things, you will religiously use this mouth wash for the sake of making yourself popular. Yes—it is said that if you neglect this mouth wash you

will be ignored (or repulsed) but if you use it regularly you will be the most popular man in the crowd. I think also of another advertisement which suggests the fear of an accident in an automobile. You have a picture of a terrible crash—somebody has skidded in his car—and all because he didn't use Need chains. It gradually dawns, I should say, upon the average man that if he doesn't use Need chains he is likely to have an accident even though he only drives around the block.

From what I have said, it is clear that fear plays a tremendous rôle in advertising and it must be recognized if not too long dwelt upon. The whole job of many advertising writers is simply that of frightening people into buying certain wares. They are alarmists. And often their alarms are absurd.

4. SOME WONDERS OF SUGGESTION

What would advertising be without that almost mystical power of suggestion? It seems that if you say a thing often enough and boldly enough, you will end by convincing the majority of people. We have lately had the best instance of this in a certain cigarette advertisement, implying that people when blindfolded can detect the superiority of this smoking product. Eminent persons are cited as having undergone this test and declared the inimitable and readily detected fineness of, let us say, Old Bold cigarettes. Yet the fact of the matter is, both scientifically and according to natural unaided reason, that not even the taste of a cigarette is a sound criterion. Another cigarette advertisement claims that this particular brand of cigarette is easy—and not only that, but even helpful—on the throat. Eminent singers and orators are quoted as saying that by smoking Plucky Strikes they find their throats in a far more health-

ful condition. Some of these advertisements almost make one believe that in order to have a good-working throat one should smoke Plucky Strikes.

But we need not linger on the subject of cigarette advertisements. Here, for example, is an announcement of a new machine-made tie. Everybody, it is said, must buy this tie if he would be in style. And it is further asserted that this tie—machine-made—“looks more like a hand-tied tie than a hand-tied tie does.” An obvious falsehood is, by repetition, made believable to the ordinary purchaser of ties, and there is consequently another customer—although not another *thinking man*.

It seems also that the advertisers in any branch of trade exaggerate the importance of their product. As I walk down the street, I see a large glaring sign which advertises a certain brand of paint and which says—and it is obviously a lie—“Save the surface and you save all.” The poor fellow who believes that is a victim, no less.

There is another feature of advertising which distorts the average man’s point of view: namely, the car cards. There, every element I have mentioned is conspicuously displayed, so that any man can read, so to speak, as he runs. Pride, desire, fear—all are appealed to in these traveling advertisements. Here, for example—and ridiculously enough—is an advertisement which tells you that in order to be in the best class you must have a certain brand of beans or peas or cigars or face powder. The power of suggestion is unlimited. Here is a statement, concerning a certain car, that the first cost is practically the last and multitudes believe it. Undoubtedly many people buy this certain make of car because they think that after they have made the initial purchase no other expense will be necessary. For doesn’t it say on the car cards

and on the billboards that "The first cost is practically the last"?

In a word, our modern advertising is very suggestive. It assumes—and, as the results show, rightly—an unlimited credulity in the reader's mind. It is based upon the idea that whatever a reader is told he will believe. Consider for a moment the advertisements for face creams that appeal, of course, especially to women. Here, let us say, is a kind of application that is guaranteed to enhance or to preserve the beauty of a woman's face. Possibly some of these creams have merit, possibly some have not, but how can any woman know without expert information? She simply guides her purchases by the car cards—and these car cards, being dictated by commercial rather than scientific motives, are not always right.

The effectiveness of suggestion appears in the advertisements for many products. A certain brand of tobacco is persistently recommended to smokers by the really unscientific saying: "Your nose knows." The fact is that your nose is not so wise as this advertisement makes it appear, but many smokers are easily thus beguiled. There is a commercial soap which recommends itself by the line, "It floats." Well, what of it? One might wonder if it was a better soap because of that fact; but no doubt its great popularity is due to that claim. To return to cigarettes, there is one advertisement which declares confidently. "I'd walk a mile for a Shamrock." Now, we all know nobody who was sober and in his right mind would walk a mile for any cigarette—yet that advertisement, I should say, has sold millions of packages of cigarettes.

The conclusion seems to be (unflattering indeed but rudely true) that the majority of the American people are very easily influenced by appeals to desire, pride, vanity, fear, and the rest. Few people seem to be critical about

advertisements. Whatever they read—if they read it often enough—they believe. Every day we see the most impossible statements made on our billboards. And if you or I happen to be skeptical, that is no reason to conclude that our skepticism is shared by the masses. Those signs must be profitable or they would not be established and displayed at such expense. And when one sees those signs—and when one looks over our magazines and newspapers—one is decidedly tempted to say that this is the Age of Advertising. Today everyone has something to sell, with greater facilities to advertise his wares, and everyone is made to believe that he needs or wants something. There seems to be no rest—no moderate contentment or change—no middle ground. Always you must buy something, or be among those who are admittedly without desire, without pride, without fear—in other words, those who have very intimately and reasonably personal plans of living.

CHAPTER XIX

America's Gallery of "Leading Citizens" Includes Megaphones of Medi- ocrity and Gadflies

1. HEROES OF SUCCESS

ONE entertaining way of looking at American life is to place its leading citizens on view: some of the individuals or types that stand out impressively and are by the crowd considered worthy of admiration, emulation, envy or—where they deal in opinions—worthy of belief. A few others may be mentioned who, while they are not popular but are indeed looked upon with hostility or suspicion by the crowd—who, in short, do not represent faithfully the average beliefs and practices—are nevertheless significant in American life.

Of course we understand that the crowd's heroes are not necessarily "great men." It would be ridiculous to say that the late William Jennings Bryan was a great man, yet he was worshiped by several million Americans, and other millions who did not like his political opinions would have agreed to place him in the company of the great. He had a style of superficial, empty eloquence that so excessively appeals to the common man and he had, to be sure, the general sentiments and opinions of the crowd. Some critics would say that popular heroes are always, or nearly always, mediocrities. But that is true mainly when one judges them as men of ideas, for a thinker of real power and independence is sure to offend the prejudices of the majority. Nor do great artists usually win the ad-

miration or sympathy of the crowd. Nor is the scientist likely to be a popular hero, although science in its creative aspects—in its record of having changed our methods and increased our powers of doing things—has within a century won for itself a commanding position in the public mind.

What the public does most readily appreciate is success. Nor does it seem to matter much what kind of success it is or how it has been obtained, so long as it does not involve any sharp antagonism to ordinary prejudices. Thus many who admire the success, let us say, of Clarence Darrow as a great criminal lawyer do not admire him as a skeptical, realistic thinker about life. Similarly, the late Luther Burbank was a celebrated and admired figure, as a man who did wonderful things with plants, with fruits and vegetables, but he was widely, severely denounced when it became known that he was an “infidel.” Even (to go back a few years) a good deal of the stigma of Robert G. Ingersoll’s anti-religious activity is modified by the facts that he was eminent in Republican politics and a highly successful, highly paid lawyer and an intimate associate of “big men.”

One may go farther and say that what most Americans admire is not only success, but success that is exhibited plentifully and strikingly in terms of dollars. Business, in a word, is the most attractive, worth-while and in some sort heroic concern of American life. And the man who is richly a winner in the business game commands a ready admiration from most people, who are apt to credit him with all sorts of other abilities or qualities which evidently he does not possess. Thus a leading banker may be quoted in the press as speaking authoritatively on very special problems of ethics or psychology, although his opinions are not more authoritative (and very likely no

different) from those of a plumber or a shoe clerk. If a man has a great deal of money, a high position, and a well-known name he is supposed to be worth listening to on any subject, regardless of his actual equipment of knowledge. It is a case, as Hazlitt wrote, of "men who speak by the pound and are heard by the acre."

No more instructive example of an American hero of success could be cited than Henry Ford. On a number of occasions, he has made himself ridiculous. He has expressed opinions, one might say almost recklessly, on matters with which he is not really competent to deal. "History," he said, "is bunk"—yet what does he know about history? His crusade of bigotry against the Jewish race (of which he so strangely professed to be innocent) was utterly absurd, and his retraction of that crusade was incredible. He has probably been freer with his opinions than any other eminent men of business in America, and they have been a weird medley indeed—and for the most part no better than the opinions of any other poorly instructed man. When he speaks on industrial problems, no doubt Mr. Ford is worthy of attention; yet because he is a big business man and one of the world's richest men, he is popularly held in exaggerated esteem and credited with a profounder and wider wisdom than he really has.

The rich man can hardly do or say anything which can take away the respect and authority which are felt to be due to his enormous wealth. Money creates an illusion of grandeur, not only in material things, but in character and wisdom. A Rockefeller, Morgan, Mellon, Schwab, Sinclair, or Doheny is a popular hero of success and, having such wealth and power, how can such a man be wrong about anything? Even after such an exposure as the oil scandal, showing such men as Sinclair and Doheny or their agents in the act of corrupting and

defrauding government, it is a question whether these men are not more admired for their boldness and cleverness. Assuredly almost any opinion expressed by them would be taken more respectfully than the opinion of an obscure scholar—especially if the rich man should confirm and the scholar should challenge the average opinion. The Rockefellers, father and son (let us even place it to their credit) have not been so very prolific in expressing opinions on a variety of subjects—principally it is known that the elder Rockefeller likes, when he speaks for publication, to emphasize the virtue of thrift and that the younger Rockefeller is conventionally a Christian who is prone to talk meaninglessly about “brotherhood in industry”—yet while their personalities and views are not really known intimately, does not the ordinary man regard them as “great men,” and would he not have a very special kind of respect for the utterance of a Rockefeller?

Nor is it simply a question of their views, which would be acceptable enough in any case because of their conventionality—a very rich man is not apt to be a rebel against the ideas of the system under which he lives but (whatever he might secretly believe) would be “reasonably” orthodox. What, first and last, most impresses the average man with respect to the successful, rich man—with respect to his position, his actions, or his opinions—is conspicuously the fact that the latter has a large slice (or many huge and complicated slices) of this world’s wealth. The latter need say nothing, he may remain personally in obscurity as a sort of mysterious individual of almost uncanny, impersonal powers and secrets (as, for example, Morgan), and he will be as much—perhaps even more—admired. He is stupendously successful, and that is enough to overwhelm such critical faculties as the average man may have—one might say that he cannot help looking up

to a Morgan or a Rockefeller as to a very superior person. True, he may envy such a man his enormous wealth—he may even exclaim against the dangers of such wealth, socially and democratically considered—but (at least in the case of the average man) he will feel a strong, underlying admiration for the possessor of financial might, millions, and magnificence.

We shall specially consider other types of "leading citizens": yet here it may be said that success regardless of its kind or the methods employed to obtain it is exceedingly venerated by the crowd in America—and perhaps here no more than elsewhere. And it is, let us understand clearly, success as exhibited in the acquisition of money and power (which are broadly the same)—in other words, success in *doing* something is not nearly so much admired as success in *getting* something: although we should bear in mind that the two achievements—*doing* and *getting*—may be and often are united. The bald way of expressing it, and not the less truthful because it sounds unpleasant, is that a man is judged by the size of his bank account. We have, of course, various and complicated ways of judging our fellows and the preceding sentence does not cover the whole truth: but it is striking enough in our observation of common thinking to be recognized as generally true: it seems to be the most ready and positive judgment that men usually make. This sort of judgment is so extreme that even when a prosperous or leading citizen in a community—in a small town or a large city—is attacked with many sharp criticisms, when personally he is or seems to be unpopular, his position is still, when all is said and done, impregnable even in the view of his critics. Almost every bad thing may be said about him, and may be true about him, but still he is a "big man"—his money is a proof of some kind of great-

ness—and he is regarded with mixed feelings of pride, envy, and admiration.

Our American heroes of success are, as I say, chiefly discovered in the business world: for it is here that money is most rapidly and largely acquired and it is this field of money-making into which most Americans venture: yet any kind of success in attracting the crowd and getting the dollars of the crowd is applauded—by this very crowd. Other criteria of success may be disputed or doubtfully regarded, other standards may seem theoretical or too fine, but money is positive, talks loudly (as people say), and asserts itself powerfully. There it is, and who can deny its virtue, its potency, its superiority? One explanation of this common feeling about men of wealth is, obviously, that money means power—power to punish and to favor as well as to vastly impress the imagination—so that with this attitude of reverence there is mingled not a little fear.

2. MEGAPHONES OF MEDIOCRITY

When we speak of this or that attitude as being characteristic of American life, we do not necessarily mean that such things are uniquely characteristic and are to be discovered nowhere else. Some conditions in our life have no doubt emphasized special qualities, have discouraged certain interests or exaggerated others, but after all there is too loose a tendency to dogmatize about national and racial traits, with no close regard for truth—and human nature, we do well to remember, is essentially and everywhere the stuff with which we deal. In what degree Americans differ in this or that quality from people in some other countries, we may cautiously leave for a more thorough investigation to determine, although in a general way we can say that the leading features of de-

mocracy and industrialism, whether good or bad, are more conspicuously displayed in our country. Thus if business is so important in America it is because here the commercial-industrial society has been more rapidly and largely developed.

It is the same with what we may call the cult of mediocrity: it seems to be typical of democracy, at the present stage any way, in a country too where the greatest number of average persons has an extraordinary weight of influence. Yet the regard for commonplaceness, and the idea that it is somehow most soundly respectable and worthy, may be found everywhere; it is none the less instructive to glance at this feature which, all international comparisons aside, is undeniably and unescapably present in American life. It is not the grand conceptions of the artist, the wise reflections of the thinker, the great truths of the scientist, or the sharp challenges of the unconventional critic which people commonly admire. What they like best is to have their own commonplace notions uttered with the voice of solemn authority.

This they can most easily understand: the obvious, the platitudinous, or the comfortably, commonly, flatteringly false. They feel a pleasant warmth of the ego when one of their heroes, as a megaphone of mediocrity, announces loudly as the last word of truth some simple idea which they, the people, hold as belonging to the unimpeachable doctrine of the average. Thus a Coolidge seems to be ideally suited to the temper of the American crowd. He says nothing that will shock them into doubt of their favorite beliefs or that will demand of them the difficult and disturbing task of thinking. What he says, in the main, is just what the village mayor or the village barber believes, with a conviction of profound wisdom, to be true. Even the myth of his silence, his so-called "Yankee"

economy of words, makes a favorable impression: for, while Americans are surely talkative enough, they have a settled notion that a man of few words is apt to be a man of wisdom. Yet they have poured upon them an endless flood of bunkistic language, and they appear always eager for more—and, yes, their hero of impressive silence, Coolidge himself, has been remarkably wordy and thus, in a perfectly appalling stream of commonplace messages and addresses, has assured the American people that their cult of mediocrity is holy indeed. He has spoken patriotically, piously, morally, commercially, democratically—he has let no item of the general faith go without his blessing. The late Harding, a more genial figure, was just as satisfactory a megaphone of mediocrity. His declaration of a "return to normalcy" was regarded as no less than an inspired utterance of a "great man": *i. e.*, a soundly, safely average American. Hoover, a man of greater ability, is just as faithfully a reflector of the common opinions held by the millions of Americans who elected him. One cannot imagine Hoover expressing a single idea on religion, morals, politics, etc., which would appear unpleasantly strange or heretical to the average man. If he has absorbed any queer, un-American ideas in his wandering about the world he may be depended upon not to expose unmannerly such a defection from the faith.

All those who continuously and most extensively appeal to the American people are similarly committed to affirmation of the average beliefs. Our newspapers, in their editorials and feature articles and cartoons, reveal an almost perfectly pure grade of one hundred percent Americanism. Their chief and devoted duty, first and last, is to justify or praise the conventional view and habit of life: they are never friendly to iconoclasm, they never swerve perceptibly from the familiar and commonplace

paths of opinion, and they never, by any chance, disturb their readers' faith in the established order. To speak of them as "educational" is to employ that term very loosely indeed: of course in a sense they educate, they convey a great deal of valuable information, and they broaden their readers' knowledge of the current world of affairs—but they are, undeniably, superficial and commonplace, while the editors and owners of our newspapers would (officially at least) consider it high praise to say that they represent "the ideas and ideals" of the average American.

After the newspapers, and perhaps an ever greater influence, we may see in the movies another immense influence in favor of the cult of mediocrity. Take nine movies out of ten, analyze the sentiments they express concerning character, the general attitude toward life which they reflect, and you have a pretty vivid picture of the mental or emotional state of the average mind. The popularity and the mediocrity of the movies are thus explained. Technically they are wonderful examples of the ingenuity of man, of man's power and skill and wealth, but artistically and intellectually they are—well, they are comical or contemptible, just as you choose to regard them. But assuredly they are not intelligent. They are (and the term is more appropriate when one regards the late development of the "talkies") among the most effective megaphones of mediocrity—the most effective indeed because they reach the greatest number of people.

Under this head—Megaphones of Mediocrity—every popular medium can fairly be placed, although some should have special consideration. What do we hear from political platforms save platitudes or bunk suited to the average mind? The pulpit does not provide original or wise utterances, although when we say that it also enshrines the megaphones of medio-

crity we should remember that we live in an increasingly skeptical age and that most of the talk about "spirituality" which emanates from the pulpit is meaningless to the people. Every realtor, mortician, hardware dealer, or Rotarian gospelizer who breaks into print or speech occupies invariably the rôle of a megaphone of mediocrity. Never does such a man intimate that he has the slightest doubt in the common American faith as it applies to the various concerns of life. Always he speaks, not as a distinctive and thinking individual, but as an average man. Similarly a man like Bruce Barton, who editorializes in a well-known magazine, utters the simple—one might even say the intellectually innocent—Rotarian creed: he speaks with the voice (or writes with the hand) of Main Street and ten thousand Chambers of Commerce. Eddie Guest, although his verse is too feeble to be called on its own account megaphonic, is nevertheless enormously magnified by repetition in the newspapers of the country and it never fails to express the sentiments of the average man. Indeed he simply writes rhymed editorials that appeal to the "Constant Reader" and that in practically every line betray a naïvely bunkistic conception of life. The late Dr. Frank Crane (peace to his ashes) wrote regularly the a-b-c of the American credo. He did show pale gleams of a hesitant liberalism, but only such as would appeal to the average American who considers himself "broad-minded" without departing really from the safe path of popular opinion. Harold Bell Wright enjoyed his remarkable splurge of popularity because he remained true to the sentimentality and expressed the simplified view of life which is so dear to the American—or to the common—mind. His decline in these latter days is due to the fact that he cannot compete with more clever (but no less conventional) entertainers and, as regards a substantial but

still minority group, cannot appeal to a more critical judgment of literature. But if Mr. Wright is outmoded, the sentimentality that characterized his novels—his feeble and unrealistic attitude toward life—is not, in the case of nine Americans out of ten, equally a thing of the past. That sentimentality still prevails, although some of us think that it may be weakening and giving way to a healthier realism, in feeling and behaviorism, if not so encouragingly in the higher reaches of thought.

Let us say, finally, that nine-tenths of what is written and spoken in America—at least in a public and official way—simply adds to the already enormously swollen volume of mediocrity. In any field of expression, the most widely and loudly acclaimed heroes of the public are those who promulgate the prejudices or dogmas of the average man. Really intelligent, original utterance is not well received save by a minority—and we are glad to say that there is good evidence of a steady increase in this minority. And it is indeed the hope of democracy—the hope of civilization—that the intellectual and cultural level of the majority will be steadily raised. We may look forward to a time when sound knowledge and free thought will be the rule, so to speak, and our present standard of mediocrity will be the exception. Meanwhile, we can but note the fact that the average is still not brilliant nor thoughtful, though far better than it was, let us say, a hundred years ago. It may be that the cult of the mediocre is enjoying its last powerful flourish, but today it prevails conspicuously and unescapably. At any rate, it is not unchallenged.

3. SOOTHSAYERS—POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS

Our political and religious prophets—adventurers—charlatans are naturally included in the other groups we have mentioned. They are heroes of success, so that even

the partisan foes of a Bryan or a Roosevelt admire them as big, showy, successful men and millions of Americans who neither believe nor are specially interested in the doctrines of Aimee Semple McPherson have a certain respect for her success, her celebrity, her money-getting skill. And Billy Sunday is, one may say, a popular hero—many scoff at him, even many Christians consider him vulgar and shamefully sensational, yet they place him among the strong, successful men of the time.

It is equally true that our politicians and preachers are megaphones of mediocrity—the opinions they express may in detail encounter much doubt or dispute among the crowd, but at bottom they are in accord with the articles of the common faith. It may even be said that the freedom of politicians is less than it used to be: for could a politician of today use the expressions that were used by Thomas Jefferson, in favor of free thinking and revolution? To be sure, Jefferson lived in a time when free thought was fashionable among the cultured classes (and democracy was not yet very strong) and when the memory of a patriotic revolution was quite recent. The fact remains that today the politician must adapt his utterances to the common, average level of belief or understanding in his audience. He cannot speak freely, for he is certain thus to offend many voters. He dare not radically depart from the common psychology and the revered traditions of the people to whom he looks for support.

Take our best politicians—consider a Reed or a Borah—and they are, after all, conventional enough. They oppose (and I think they soundly oppose) the Wilsonian arrangement for a League of Nations: and at first glance this seems to be a bold, independent attitude: yet actually their opposition consists of appeals to the

old-fashioned sentiment of American isolation and independence. They strengthen their case by working upon a most basic emotion of the average man, the emotion of patriotic pride in his Americanism. If we study the most successful politicians who are, nevertheless, emancipated from the most narrow ideas of partisanship, we find that none of them really breaks with basic American tradition. None of them expresses freely any heretical opinions on general subjects, apart from politics—although they may, even so, throw out phrases of comfort to the conventionally-minded in these apparently non-political fields of thought or opinion. On specific issues of legislation, such an unusual politician may now and then take a lone stand—he may go against his party or the temporary sentiments of the country—but he does not, in any case, irremediably offend the basic general principles in which the American voter puts his faith. However, let us yield to these few men all the credit that is due them; let us not try to make them appear less than they are; let us be grateful for any sign of independence, for any sign of plain and fair speaking in our public men.

Those with whom we are now specially concerned are the common or gaudy variety of politicians who sonorously appeal to the greatest number of voters. Plainly, these men do not confine themselves to specific issues of legislation and administration; they are bound to discuss general principles, not only in the field of politics, but in the field of morals and of religion and of custom. First of all, every politician must impress upon the masses the belief that he is a sterling patriot, and it matters not that the terms in which he displays his patriotism communicate an erroneous view of history or cultivate a dangerous spirit of chauvinism. In fact, the rule is that politicians encourage the very tendencies of national and racial prejudice

which all of the best thinkers of our time are trying to obliterate. They justify, in a word, the past mistakes of the country and encourage the country to commit future blunders. Ask yourself for example, whether any politician could safely (as far as his prospects of office are involved) recommend a really broad, intelligent program of internationalism. The advocacy of such a program is left rather to thinkers and critics appealing only to a minority. Wilsonian internationalism, by the way, was one-third utopian and two-thirds absolutely fraudulent. The so-called "ideals" of Wilson, never very clear nor practical in the first place, were distorted and corrupted to suit the selfish, greedy aims of European politicians. Yet even the idea of internationalism was enough to wreck Wilson and turn the American people against him—they were easily led to believe that internationalism *per se* was "un-American."

Again, the politician must make clear his unswerving allegiance to the moral notions of the American crowd, regardless of truth or fairness. He must, if there is any current movement (as there is today) for more sanely adjusted standards, announce firmly his opposition to such a new movement. To be precise, what politician would dare to say that he believes in the idea of companionate marriage? Such a statement would mean his death politically—he might thus prove his independence and his self-respect but he would wreck his career as a seeker of the great majority of common votes—in a word, no politician can safely proclaim his opinion on any moral issue unless that opinion agrees (as in many, perhaps most, cases it does really agree) with the opinion of the average man.

This handicap is just as clear in the matter of religion. Most politicians no doubt believe in the verbal formulas or in the vague general principles of religion, even though

religion means little to them practically; but say that a politician is secretly a skeptic—well, he must keep his skepticism secret. He must indeed play the hypocrite and in his speeches use some eloquence on the necessity of religion as the foundation of true morality and government. He may be vague—there is in this skeptical age of disturbed and changing faiths a wider range of utterance—no special doctrine, no particular creed, no definite church need be upheld (indeed such a limitation is inadvisable from the point of view of vote-getting)—but on the values of religion, whatever it may mean, the politician must be plain-spoken to the satisfaction of the average man.

Even on issues that are definitely political, the man who seeks to ride into lucrative and influential office on a tide of millions of votes cannot be too clearly committed. It is usually the case in political campaigns that everything save the really important issues are discussed: so that one might suggest a novel kind of campaigning—debates, let us say, on the question of whether there is a Santa Claus, on whether golf or tennis is a better game, on whether winter or summer is the more healthful enjoyable season, on whether (to take a suggestion from old school debates) fire or water is a more destructive element. Certainly, if politicians adopted this style of campaigning they would avoid the embarrassment of being too definite about questions in which the voters are currently, vitally interested. It may be replied that today they escape this dilemma very well, and that is indeed the truth. Politicians are experts (although the trade is not so difficult) in saying a great deal and meaning very little. They certainly are not successful, politically, because of what they say or do not say—unless one credits their success, after recognizing the weight of normal party majorities, to a

complete (sometimes naturally dull, sometimes studiedly clever) agreement with the ideas which are held, firmly and self-confidently, by the average American.

Certainly, no man can enter politics with the hope of asserting his originality or bringing enlightenment to the people—indeed, even when he has for his aim the defense of popular rights, the enlargement of opportunities for the common man, he will find that the enormous weight of propaganda which is employed by the ruling classes has already hopelessly perverted the public mind and has made his crusade impossible. Some liberals are fond of asserting that any politician who has courage to proclaim the rights of the masses will certainly succeed, but experience does not prove this optimistic statement. The men who fight bravely for popular rights are, in the majority of cases, sacrificed by the popular ignorance and intolerance which have been drilled into the common minds by the insidiously skillful mechanical agencies of special interests—and we know that the record of history is full of illustrious names of men who met death or disgrace at the hands of the very people they tried to help. From what has been said, it may follow that one cannot blame a politician for being secretive, inconsistent, hypocritical, and the like. Perhaps not, but one can at least have a poor opinion of anyone who selects politics as a trade: for even in a commercial career, he would be certainly freer. The question is: How can any honest, intelligent man make a success in a political career?

When we consider the preachers, we are on more slippery ground. It is not that the preachers are more courageous or more original than the politicians. But it is a question, rather, of just what influence religion—and the pronouncements of the preaching fraternity—have upon the mind of the average man in America today. We

cannot say off-hand that what most preachers say is a true reflection of the common American mind. More than in any other time—more even than ten years ago—people take a critical attitude toward the rhetoric and dogma which are characteristic of the pulpit. At most, it can be said (or assumed) that the basic sentimental-moral considerations of the preacher's viewpoint—or his traditionally supported appeal to the emotions—is agreeable, vaguely, to the average man.

Here, of course, we encounter the doubtful question of how widely religion is seriously taken in America today. At once we may assert that most of the high-flown verbiage of the preacher, about "spirituality" and all related illusions, passes over the head of the average man. Yet when the preacher talks (as most of them do) on sentiment, character, morals, etc., the average man is well pleased—he finds, in short, his favorite opinions given a sacred sanction. On points of doctrine, it seems that there is a great confusion and disagreement. The literalness of religion seems to be disappearing and in its place, as probably a transitional element of belief, is a feeling that somehow or other religion in a general way is a good—even a necessary—influence. I should say that two-thirds of what the preachers say in the present day passes entirely over the heads of their audience (in the church itself or in the country as a whole) while one-third is simply a repetition of platitudes which confirms the belief of the average man, not as to religion but as to his general view of life. It does not seem to me that preachers influence the age. They are significant only insofar as they agree with the major influences—the newspapers, the politicians, the movies, etc.—but alone they are not very important. We do know, however, that they dare not offend the common ideas. They cannot put forth any original thought. They

too must be megaphones of mediocrity, and not necessarily sacred.

4. GADFLIES

It has been said that the popular heroes of America today are not the men who express bold, clever, original, actually upsetting ideas. Yet a few words about such men will make an appropriate ending to this chapter of our survey. Let us say at once that such men are more important today than they were ten years ago. There is that lively, irrepressible team of gadflies (if we can use such an expression), Mencken and Nathan. Just reflect for a moment upon how, in the past ten years, they have widened their sphere of influence. A very small clique used to read the bold, skeptical, "un-American" utterances of these men. And now, if it is still a minority that reads them, it is a much larger minority—and it may be day after tomorrow this minority will swell to a majority, and if so, so much the better. We cannot understand the gadflies without knowing that for many years—indeed until within the past ten or fifteen years—American thought and literature and art were terribly under the influence of an out-of-date Puritanism.

Such critics as Mencken and Nathan, Van Wyck Brooks, in history Hendrik Van Loon, in sex and associated subjects William J. Fielding, in biography and a study of current business life in America W. E. Woodward, in the broadest skepticism and realistic thinking about almost everything Clarence Darrow—these are the real gadflies of modern America that are trying to sting the average citizen (for obviously they need not appeal to the intellectual or cultured, who already share their views) into a sharper, more truthful view of life. As I say, not much need here be remarked about these stingers

and jolters of contemporary thought because they do not represent the average American mind, but are on the contrary the voice of rebellious, critical America.

It is at least encouraging to observe that such critics as Mencken and Nathan, such iconoclasts as Woodward, and such generally free thinkers as Darrow are gaining, day by day, a wider audience in America. Even orthodoxy is not today the ironclad organization of beliefs and rituals that it was only a few years ago. A great deal of what skeptics said fifty years ago is admitted today by people who are conventionally regarded as good Christians. We have undoubtedly advanced—and this advancement is chiefly due to the gadflies. Certainly, the megaphones of mediocrity would never have changed the ideas of a majority or a minority. They are only echoes. The real leaders of the world have new tones and thoughts. Upon these new tones and thoughts we must—admitting the facts of today and encouraging the hope of the future—base our optimistic conviction of a higher civilization. It is only by these instruments and influences that civilization can be raised to a higher level.

CHAPTER XX

Americans Are More Than Ever in a Position of Economic and Cultural Opportunity to Develop a World Interest

1. BEFORE AND AFTER 1914

THIS (1914) is obviously the date which one must emphasize as marking a great change in America's relations with the world, in America's world interests and policy. The guns in Europe awoke the American nation to bewildered and intense realization of a large world of affairs which previously had been little heeded. In a few years, America reached a far greater degree of world-consciousness than it had ever felt before.

Before 1914 this country had not been much disturbed by what happened in the rest of the world, being almost entirely concerned with domestic issues, subconsciously feeling perhaps that only the problems, personalities and happenings of American life were of any close, vital importance. Strangely enough, it might seem, even the extensive immigration from the countries of Europe, and the contact of many Americans with natives from a score of countries—this rapidly growing cosmopolitan or mixed character of our country's population—was not a compelling influence of, let us say, international curiosity. It rather served to intensify the American feeling of aloofness and superiority, chiefly for economic reasons: although, to be sure, this contact was not without a stimu-

lating effect upon the American imagination, and in cities or districts with a large foreign population there was an unescapable if insufficiently studied course of education in foreign customs. As America was wholly settled by foreigners—all of us or our ancestors having been immigrants not so long ago—one might argue, from this single consideration, that it should be the most cosmopolitan in spirit and vividly aware of the world. Against that tendency, however, was the strong fact of the country's geographical isolation and its naturally intense concentration upon cultivating and civilizing a vast new territory. The older immigrants, once established and in power, took a lordly attitude toward the later immigrants.

In the Spanish-American war, Americans had a passing but not a very profound thrill of international excitement. Their country engaged itself in a brief war with a once mighty European power—a power that had enjoyed the first adventures and profits in the discovery of America. And, with some new possessions in the Pacific, America was for a time stirred by the issue of imperialism. But the country had more interesting problems at home. There was the money question, the trusts, and the whole controversy which grew out of the portentous mighty industrialism which quickly dominated the country. There were investigations, commissions, regulations, strikes, court decisions, endless issues of political-economic agitation. The country at large had very little interest in what happened outside its borders—save in neighboring Mexico, where American capital was heavily interested and where from time to time the political spotlight was shifted. That, however, by virtue of the Monroe Doctrine and the feeling that the interest was physically near home, was regarded as a "domestic" problem: Americans have always felt that their Federal Government had as

good a right to dictate to Mexico as to an American state—indeed a better right—and less considerately. Minor troubles (when regarded on a world scale) in Central America and the West Indies have similarly been felt, yet really with popular indifference, as American rather than international business.

So, while it cannot be said that before 1914 the people of America were quite unaware or indifferent concerning the rest of the world—to be sure, they read a good deal in their newspapers and magazines and were taught something in their schools about foreign countries—it is nevertheless true that they retained essentially the old American spirit of isolation, did not feel really involved in world events, and looked at all foreign news almost as if it were something on the stage. America, it might have seemed, was working out a separate destiny and living a separate life having little or nothing to do with the rest of the world.

That, fairly speaking and not pressing the idea too far, was the situation in August, 1914, when Europe suddenly became a mighty continental theater of warfare and not alone America but every part of the civilized world was shocked into tremendous interest. Not *alone* America, but *especially* America—for very quickly this country became important as the chief source of supplies for the fighting nations, and that meant, when the Allied blockade was effectively established, the chief source of supplies for the Allies against Germany. In any case, Americans would have been intensely interested and, if only by following in the newspapers the operations and studying the theater of the war, would have been brought out of their national isolation. Here was a world-shaking event—a terrible condensed subject for an epic—that was bound to bring vast changes. Here was a struggle that no one,

living anywhere in a civilized community, could ignore and that no one could regard calmly or superficially. This immense catastrophe frightfully compelled the nations to a world consciousness if not to a world co-operation and amity.

And America was from the beginning of the conflict, and increasingly by the strategic nature of her industrial position, aroused to a special interest. At once President Wilson made his appeal for neutrality, yet "taking sides" in the war was quickly the favorite American pastime, although opinions did not so early run passionately high. Pro-German and pro-Ally met then on merely disputatious, not bitter and perilous, ground. There were even Americans who ingeniously argued that, as America and Germany were the two most scientifically advanced capitalistic countries, they would be more in sympathy. At any rate, there was no spirit of mobbing one or the other party. And while Americans took a new and lively interest in world events, they did not as a whole have any thought or desire to participate actively in this foreign struggle. The country was dramatically awakened and interested—it learned (or was told, sometimes truly, sometimes falsely) a great deal about European history and the psychology of the different nations—the fortunes of the contending armies were curiously and even eagerly discussed—but the spirit of pacifism, so far as America was concerned, still was overwhelmingly prevalent. There was little thought that America would become one of the belligerents. Of course Wilsonian neutrality was not observed in discussion but there was no general, practical idea that the country would enter the war on one side or the other.

This situation was steadily and ominously changed as American capital came to be enlisted on the side of the

Allied nations. A powerful propaganda movement in American newspapers and magazines appealed to the sympathies, the prejudices and, first and last, the easy-going credulity of the American people. Atrocity tales, unreasonable and unverified, were spread widely. The Germans were represented as bestial and ferocious, the Allies as gallant and on the defensive. And the latter, too, were praised as standing guard for democracy against autocracy. Sympathy with the Allies was most skilfully (although crudely to the critical mind) developed in this country, yet not—until April, 1917, and even afterward—to the point of passionate belief. Thus 1917 was the real date of America's entry into the World War and into world affairs. It was then, one might say, that we began to identify ourselves (even though in an unscientific way) internationally; although, after America had declared war against Germany, there was a notable lack of enthusiasm in the country at large until the dragooning influence of the conscription and espionage acts had done their ruthless work.

Doubtless in the early months of 1917 there was a stronger feeling against Germany—a more pronounced tipping of the sentimental scales in favor of the Allies—than could have been witnessed in 1914, '15, or '16: all that was due clearly to newspaper propaganda, which has since been proved to have been fraudulent (as a great deal of it was so exposed at the time). In a word, the American people, who never very well understood the European struggle, were influenced by a flood of lies, by sensational cries, and by the most treacherous emotional appeals. This war propaganda evidently influenced high officials in the government (from Wilson down) more than the country at large, although it certainly did produce a steadily mounting sentiment all over the country

against Germany. At any rate, Wilson—only a few months after having been elected on the celebrated slogan: "He kept us out of war"—made a declaration of war against Germany, which, not received with wild patriotic enthusiasm, was nevertheless far more popular than it would have been in 1915 before the tremendous efforts of propaganda had been made in favor of the Allies. I say that while the declaration of war against Germany was met conventionally with a certain patriotic acclaim—a sort of Fourth-of-July ringing of bells, firing of commemorative cannon, and circus-like display—there was at bottom no genuine national enthusiasm for war. And that statement requires no better proof than the actual figures of enlistment before the passing of the draft law. Americans shouted, but they didn't join—until they had to. No volunteer army of any size could have been raised to fight in Europe. This argument is indeed sometimes used by defenders of the conscription act, but these persons entirely waive the question of whether the object of fighting was necessary, just, or anyway defensible in itself. It is no argument to say that a bunch of men would not voluntarily go down and jump into the river—that they must be made by law to do so—because the first question is: Why, justly and reasonably, should they jump into the river?

But the war machine was set in motion—with extraordinary autocracy and graft (to "make the world safe for democracy," remember)—and resistance was futile. Because of a few brave, candid remarks (not really affecting the conduct of the war one way or another, as the majority had been thoroughly beaten by government forcefulness or deceived by newspaper lying) Eugene V. Debs was placed in a prison cell. There was no group strong enough to oppose the war machine. Very quickly (show-

ing the enormous power of propaganda and, with it, the dangerous subservience to government) a peaceable country was changed into a country mad for blood—and none more bloodthirsty than those who stayed at home and used their mightiest efforts to send everyone else to the battlefields. From then on, it was obvious that Americans would feel an extraordinary interest in those battles, policies, and negotiations which were crucially assailing, as it seemed, the foundations of an age-old world—and which did indeed change the map of Europe, overturn thrones, and suggest forcibly many new (if not at once successful) conceptions of world policy.

There is no doubt that historians of the future, seeking to divide (or to make the first great division) in American history, will emphasize 1914: or, let us say, 1914 will serve as the second great dividing date—the date when America was first shocked into intense, lasting world awareness—while 1865 will be regarded as the first great dividing date, when America first became safely and finally a united nation. At any rate, what may be called international awareness in America dates from the World War, although some place the new attitude in 1914 and some in 1917: what is beyond dispute is the immense, irresistible, ultra-dramatic cause of the change. Immediately after the war, America found itself confronted with the most confusing and thought-provoking problem of internationalism. The Wilsonian League of Nations, rather than any domestic problem, became the predominating subject of political contention. We were debating, not American affairs, but world affairs. It is true that the League of Nations, as eventually organized by the diplomats (who outfigured poor old Wilson), was anything but international and pacific and really just or far-seeing. The American Senators who opposed the

adoption of the "covenant" were quite right in their object, but their motive—the preservation of the traditional American spirit of isolation—was decidedly narrow and not at all admirable. In fact, it was and is an encouragement to the very spirit of chauvinism and war which has been throughout historic time the menace of civilization.

The fact remains that the mind of America has been turned to a great extent in the direction of world affairs: war debts, the economic recovery of Europe, the political-diplomatic negotiations and disputes of the European nations, the upheaval in China, the revolution in Russia and its consequences in Asia, England's policies in India, Egypt and Ireland—all these have more vividly engaged the thoughts of Americans than any world issues before the past decade and a half. At last America has taken its place consciously among the nations—what happens anywhere in the world is now of vital concern to the American people—imaginatively we have broken away from our old isolation—and, practically, America has achieved a position of world importance (or, as it is said truly enough, of leadership) in international affairs which makes it unthinkable for us any longer to "stay in our own backyard." Now, America cannot be separated from the world. We have a new and growing realization that our interests are not only national but that—not merely idealistically but practically—they are international.

2. THE DANGERS OF IMPERIALISM

"Imperialism" is a word that was first made familiar to Americans after the Spanish-American war, when the United States acquired foreign possessions and protectorates (a nicer but not necessarily very distinctive term) and emerged, so to speak, as an international power. It served as an issue for Bryan—an issue not very intelli-

gently used—when the money question went stale. A campaign against imperialism was, indeed, well suited to the traditional American attitude, which was that of attending strictly to this country's business and letting other countries alone: here was a vast country, amply sufficient for Americans, so why adventure abroad? For this very reason, perhaps, the issue of imperialism excited only a passing attention from the voters. We did not become, rapidly and dangerously, as Bryan predicted, an imperialistic nation: and the Philippines, Cuba, etc., were soon casually accepted mementoes of a near-romantic interlude in the nation's life, not exciting, not threatening, not calling for agitation or alarm. Our interventions in Central and South American affairs have, for brief periods, been hotly discussed—the latest discussion, one will recall, was concerning our Nicaraguan adventure—but they have not reached the status of great national issues: although, even so, an Iowa farmer whose son (a marine) was killed in Nicaragua naturally is curious as to what the fighting was about and resentful, to put it mildly, that our government should sacrifice any life for the protection of "American interests," meaning certain business interests not at all important to the country at large.

And it is true that imperialism, on however limited a scale, is a danger to the American people, while it benefits a relatively very small class. Take the problem of Mexico. Repeatedly we have had agitations about a Mexican war, and some actual hostilities have occurred, which have thrust into the foreground the issue of what should be our attitude toward our southern neighbor among the nations. Now, there was never any really national or patriotic reason why we should interfere in Mexican affairs. Some special investments—some narrow, class interests—were all that demanded protection. It

would be a case of sacrificing the interests of the whole country for the sake of an infinitesimal fraction of the country—infinitesimal in numbers, but enormous in wealth and power. True, the United States could safely (so far as its own territory and sovereignty is concerned) invade Mexico and do as it pleased. It would not, from that point of view, be a dangerous adventure. But (not to mention the expense) it would mean a tremendous loss of life—and for what purpose? Merely to let a few capitalistic investors do as they wished in a foreign country, which has an equal right with our own country to control affairs within its borders. At present, all is peace and good will between Mexico and the United States. But there is small doubt that the relations between the two countries are an ominous source of future trouble.

Until 1914 Americans did not think very much about "imperialism" or America's dealing with foreign nations or territories—and perhaps they do not intelligently think or realize much about it now—but, at any rate, since the World War conditions have critically changed. It is no longer simply a question of what we shall do in Mexico, Nicaragua, or Venezuela, but of what shall be our position respecting the greater powers of Europe and (Japan especially) of the Far East. For since the late war, America has attained a commanding and continually aggressive place in the world scheme. We have for years, of course, been extending our markets and sending American products to every corner of the globe, which in itself—society being as it is—represents a real and growing danger.

The underlying cause of the World War was only commercial competition and that will be the cause of the next war—the next war which is bound to happen in defiance or contempt of all the superficially idealistic talk about "the war to end war." In that next war, America

will certainly have a leading rôle. We are today the richest, strongest, most commercially successful nation in the world—and therefore we are in the most dangerous position. We may have been able to keep our attention upon our own domestic business before 1914—although our involvement in world affairs was gradually extending—but now it is plain to every man that we are, to use the common expression, a world power. Furthermore, we are for the time being the dominant world power. America, let us say, is the world's banker, the world's merchant, the world's dictator and, summing all, the world's creditor—but it is not to a friendly, willing world that she dictates.

So we are, through our foreign interests, continually in danger of war. The average citizen, because of trade relations and political (economic) conspiracies from which he does not benefit—which are indeed insidiously directed against him—will be commanded to die. It is true, then, that now more than any other time is the vital occasion to discuss the very probable—almost certain—results of what we call American imperialism. Only a decade ago we entered a war in which, as a country, we had no concern. Many lives were sacrificed, many billions were spent to guarantee the investments of a few men. The United States was really a loser and in a game that was not, first and last, this country's game. I say America was the loser. We lost many lives and we lost a great deal of wealth which, surely, we will never get back: and we lost furthermore certain pacific and free traditions which were more valuable essentially than all the rest. We were fighting—so it was said—against autocracy and militarism. Yet today in the United States there is less freedom and there is more of the militaristic tendency than ever before. It would perhaps be no great exaggeration to say that we have changed rôles with Germany, or in-

deed that every nation in the Allied group has taken over the so-called German idea. Colleges in America make military training compulsory. Powerful forces, including especially the American Legion, demand a permanent conscription law. Free speech is idly or inimically considered, whereas it was once a proud right of every American citizen. In many ways, besides life and treasure, America has suffered from the European madness. We have not yet begun to realize the full, terrible cost of the war.

And now, with the war over, we find America in a very prosperous and at the same time a very dangerous situation: leading in the world's markets but exposed also to the hate and war-breeding antagonism of other countries: a country that no longer attends to its own business but that meddles perilously in the inflammatory affairs of other countries. Of course, imperialists would put it that "our" business has become international but, on imperialistic principles, the danger is the same.

It is certainly not my belief that America should have (or that it could have) stayed in the old isolation. It is well that there should be an intelligent, peaceable concern with world affairs. Internationalism, wisely and humanely considered, is the ideal toward which we should look. As it was anciently said that no man lives to himself alone, so it is true that today no country can live to itself alone. Yet an internationalism of aggressive trade and constantly threatening war is not agreeable to the interest of the average citizen. Politicians may fool him with their slogans, but the fact remains—stark and awful—that any belligerent assertion of so-called American honor (really meaning American trade) will cost this average citizen's life and money. It should be a settled principle of American government that any investment anywhere should be an individual risk and should not involve at all the coun-

try as a whole. Why, for example, should you and I be drawn into a war because certain Americans have money invested in China? Why should any man fight for another man's dollars?

Imperialism has no logical defense. It has only—and that "only" is great—the propaganda force of our newspapers behind it. Today the average American has no feeling of hatred toward any country. He has even forgotten to hate the Germans. But tomorrow, or in a few days, if certain interests should require it, our newspapers would manufacture the most bitter hatred toward any country you might mention. And the fatal point is that certain interests will, soon or late, require it. We cannot live in peace, content, as Voltaire said, to dig in our own garden. We must (or our capitalists must) go abroad—range the Seven Seas and commercially assail markets remote—in search of trade and trouble. If we do not become involved directly in war on our own account, then we will be drawn into a war on somebody else's account: *i. e.*, "our" interests will be on one side or the other, which is to say the interests of a very small group of men. Imperialism is only a stupendous threat to the peace, prosperity and safety of the average American citizen but it is certainly a wonderful urge to business in behalf of, let us say, a "militant minority." It is wrong that American lives should follow American dollars. It is unjust and infinitely perilous that our country should engage politically, as it were, in world trade. Our extended relations with the world do not represent a comfortable kind of "internationalism."

3. OUR NEED OF WORLD CULTURE

Various influences are working toward a real internationalism of peace and world-wide social order, just

how successfully it is not easy to say. On the one hand, modern imperialism has menaces that cannot be ignored. On the other hand, there is a greater knowledge of the world—at least of what the rest of the world is doing and what superficially it is thinking—but this last should not make us too optimistic. Men can know each other very well and yet be led to fight each other. When passions are aroused—when safety and self-interest are alleged, however falsely, to be at stake—sane things are overwhelmed in the flood. It would be foolish to pretend that even a broad, intelligent familiarity with world culture serves as a guarantee against the war illusion or madness—certainly we know how cultured individuals can lose their heads in war time. We may say that these individuals are swept along with the general madness, and that the case would be different if this world culture were common rather than confined to a few. The fact is that such culture is not usually broad and free from prejudice but is perverted by the spirit of too intense nationalism. No matter how much Americans may have known understandingly the Germans or have admired German music, literature, philosophy, and science, they would have been the more easily victims of propaganda for hatred so long as they regarded the Germans as foreigners, thought of the interests of the two countries as antagonistic, and were imbued with the jealousy, suspicion and pride of nationalism. It is this spirit of nationalism which is the poison to destroy, when fully released, the fine influence of world culture.

Even so, an understanding of the different national or racial cultures is a good influence, one that should be steadily encouraged, and the more of it the better. No doubt the growth of such an understanding in modern times has done a great deal to inspire the movement, not

simply for a temporary or provisional peace, but for universal, permanent peace—a movement that was never so earnest or widely spread, misled and cheated though it is in many respects, as it is in our day. It is, after all, quite unfair to blame this attitude of universal citizenship and culture for not having organized, pacified, and as it were, completely enlightened the world. Plainly such an attitude is still found only in a small minority and, if hints of or approaches to this attitude are more readily observed to-day than in the past, still it has not been long nor extensively at work in changing the opinions of mankind. It is true that there have always been exceptional persons of great wisdom and humanity who were too big for national limitations and who could see and deplore the terrible folly of war. Yet it may fairly be said that the ideal of internationalism and permanent peace is a product of the modern mind and modern conditions. For many centuries men regarded war as one of the natural conditions of life. Many still regard it in that light and the argument is seriously made by eminent journals and leaders of opinion. But the ideal of pacifism has firmly established itself in modern society, it will continue to grow, and world culture will undoubtedly promote it.

It is not well to make excessive or too sudden claims for the effectiveness of world culture nor to exaggerate the extent to which Americans (as we are particularly considering our own countrymen) are interested by—or really, sympathetically understand—the customs, thoughts, and achievements of other countries. It is enough to point out that such an understanding, such a broad and intelligent and sympathetic viewpoint, not only will (if it is spread widely enough) encourage peace but that, first and last, it is absolutely essential to peace. In a word, ignorance and misunderstanding among the nations

play into the hands of the war-makers. Whatever else may be practically necessary to realize the ideal of internationalism, the ideal of permanent peace, world culture is certainly necessary.

We can at least be optimistic enough to admit that this attitude (perhaps world awareness or international understanding would be a less forbidding term than culture, though the latter may be taken liberally as to meaning) has increased in America, especially since 1914: or let us say in the decade between 1918 and 1928. More Americans wish, genuinely in the spirit of education, to know about world history and world affairs. Not only has our own literature had a remarkable development but we have become more widely interested in the literature of other nations. We have at least made a definite beginning in the recognition that America, after all, is only part of the world and not a world by itself. We are speaking, to be sure, of tendencies rather than great or finally accomplished transformations. There is still a vast influence of provincialism in America, but it is decreasing. America is far from being ideally cultured or cosmopolitan, but it is becoming more nearly so. Patriotism, in the narrow sense, seems to be just as big a menace as ever, but on the other hand the spirit of internationalism is being more intelligently and earnestly cultivated.

One could not indeed expect that in a few years an international habit of mind would be thoroughly developed, that men could broaden their view of life to the extent of thinking not as Americans but as human beings, as citizens of the world, not of a single country—indeed, it would be ridiculously unfair to expect such an attitude when we reflect that there is no clear, recognizable quality or form of world citizenship, save that which is individually realized through the medium of a world culture that

is, after all, rare. At any rate, I believe there are more Americans today who are capable of taking the best of thought and culture from all ages and all countries: who can judge things according to their merits, regardless of their German, French, Russian or American origin: who can see life as a great human adventure and say, with a true international spirit, that all the world is a common stage and that all of the peoples of the world are actors; who do not let the artificial boundaries of politicians or map-makers determine narrowly their sympathies or interests; who consider all things, let us say, from a scientific viewpoint of judgment and an artistic viewpoint of appreciation. Certainly this is not a common attitude in America (nor in any other country) but it is still the excellently right attitude and, while it is more widespread, we think, today, it has yet far to go and should be persistently encouraged, in their various ways, by all who have been emancipated from the old misconceived limitations.

There is no doubt that it is still too commonly thought in this country that "American" is a word signifying all or superior virtues. We are still too apt at priding ourselves on America's supremacy in wealth and industry, while not paying enough attention to America's contribution to world culture on the one hand and its receptivity to world culture on the other hand. Every day we read in our newspapers long articles about America's leadership, but the emphasis is largely upon this country's superior industrial technique and productivity and upon its position as the wealthiest nation in the modern world.

Certainly all this is important, and no reader will expect me to repeat the stale, foolish criticism of American materialism. This materialism is fine, unimpeachable, and hopeful—but it is not all. Truly we have a great deal to

offer (at the market price) to other countries—and things which they undoubtedly desire more than anything else—but why have not other countries, poor and economically embarrassed as they may be, something to offer us? There is not a civilized country in the world but what has a rich culture from which we can profit intellectually—yes, and in the cultivation of our emotional life—far more than we have, far more than we have been interested to try.

No American is anywhere near a complete man who prides himself simply upon the notion that he is familiar with and loyal to the traditions of his own country, that he knows something about American history and literature, that he has what may be called, rather uncertainly, an American habit of mind. The Nordic or the one hundred percent American cult is not only unscientific—which at once rules it out of intelligent consideration—but it is pernicious to the last degree in all its emotional and social consequences. It creates strife and suspicion, indeed, and it accentuates, makes a virtue of, ignorance. Anyone who is bound tightly and jealously by such a point of view shuts himself out from a vast world of wisdom, beauty and humanity.

Even setting aside the question of social results—which is obviously the greater question—the individual is making a mistake to follow such a limited scheme of life. He can get so much more out of life by really living in the world rather than in one part of the world, as a rule not merely in one country, but in one section of that country. No man should let himself remain confined within narrow bounds when, by a reasonable effort of thought and sympathy, he can immensely broaden his field of experience and enter fully into the lives of his fellow men. Life is short—why, then, let it stagnate in ignorance or be

destroyed in senseless strife? To have an American mind, in the narrow (and, as I say, uncertain) sense is a confession of intellectual failure. One should be able to appreciate the French mind—or, not to put too fine a point upon it, what the French mind has contributed to world culture—the German mind, the Russian mind, the Chinese mind, and so on. One should strive at least toward the ideal of evolving, out of the broadest understanding, a world point of view.

In the past, America, it may be said, has been handicapped by its geographical isolation and its particular concentration upon building a new country. Yet here we have had increasingly the most wonderful mingling of peoples. And now Americans are more than ever in a position of economic and cultural opportunity to develop a world interest and, as a gradual but growing result, a more intelligent world viewpoint. Historical life is an adventure of the human race and as such is to be broadly and thoughtfully studied. War, the result of economic conflict and narrow nationalism and misunderstanding, has been a folly of terrible cost to mankind. And not only war, but loss of the benefits of possible co-operation—loss of common or correlated effort and exchange of ideas—has been due to the neglect of world culture. The ideal of internationalism does not apply simply to the question of war or peace but to every question of life.

CHAPTER XXI

We All Talk Endlessly About “Americanism,” but Who Knows What It Means?

1. WHAT IS “AMERICANISM”?

“**A**MERICANISM” is a term, of declamation rather than definition, which raises a great deal of confusion in the popular mind. Probably any man would be ready to tell you what it means (*i.e.*, what he thinks it means) and yet it cannot be said that it is clearly decided and agreed. Any statement of an ideal “Americanism” is sure to begin a heated dispute. It is employed dogmatically in behalf of various movements, the object being to arouse patriotic enthusiasm or prejudice and, almost invariably, to confuse the issue. It is really a sort of club with which unfairly to hit an opponent, disqualifying him and his cause on the ground that they are “un-American.” And as a matter of fact, whether the term is rightly or wrongly used, it is not so very important. The operation of present, real intelligence and not an appeal to national or traditional feelings should settle every issue. Facts are more important than phrases that smack too strongly of demagoguery.

What for instance, has “Americanism,” so called, to do with economic issues in our own time? Conservatives say they are standing for true Americanism by defending the good old system of our fathers (forgetting, however, or choosing to ignore the fact that this system has undergone quite important changes). Radicals declare that

they are the really good Americans, seeking to extend the American principle of democracy (which is not, however, peculiarly nor exclusively American), and advocating changes that will be to the country's advantage. Yet, after all, the question is a living economic issue, to be judged by contemporary facts and tendencies, so that the better cause would lose none of its merit even though it should happen to be "un-American" in some sense or other or, let us say, opposed to a senseless, dogmatic, incorrigible kind of patriotism.

Yet while the term "Americanism" has in no case any logical validity; while any good thing which may be implied by that term is good regardless of its alleged Americanism; while it is actually just as good an argument for or against an idea to say that it is German or Russian or French as to say that it is American—still, this reasonless and confusing cry is heard from the most opposite quarters.

When there is an action against freedom of speech, it is taken in the name of Americanism: somehow, directly or remotely, there is a danger or an insult to the country, to our traditions, to the holy ideal of patriotism. And the defenders of free speech likewise appeal to American traditions—an appeal that may be good propaganda technique but that certainly has nothing reasonably to do with the question. Free speech is a human issue, an issue not simply of justice, but of intelligence, and can neither be condemned nor justified on national (as opposed to rational) grounds. So far as American history goes, striking examples both of tolerance and bigotry, free speech and suppression, may be cited. But in the present day and as regards present policy, free speech is an intellectual and social question.

The cry of a narrow patriotism—of a false, utterly

illogical and absurd patriotism or traditionalism or, as it is at bottom, emotionalism—is brought to bear, and with a sad influence too, upon nearly every idea that is offered for common discussion. When anyone urges an enlightened attitude toward sex, he is accused of trying to corrupt the standard of virtue that is identified as part of Americanism. It is said to be "un-American," for example, to advocate companionate marriage. This idea, which is perfectly and plainly sane and not at all revolutionary (being indeed a reflection of actual conditions and an effort intelligently to control these conditions), is sometimes called Russian, or Pagan, or heathen—anyway, it is declared to be absolutely incompatible with "Americanism." Here the objection, as we recognize, is basically religious—we have the theological notion of sin—but patriotism or Americanism, in its supposed moral implications, is effectively used.

Prohibitionists (and advocates of other reforms) assert that they are maintaining the fine ideal of morality and the public good which, they say, is inseparably a feature of Americanism. In reply, the opponents of such reformism call eloquently upon "Americanism" in the shape of personal liberty and individualism. And neither side is, in this instance, making a really important point. What we have here are questions that have no bearing upon Americanism or Germanism or Russianism, but rather questions of fact and right: What are the just and sensible limitations of a democracy—that is, how far should the majority be the maker of laws and customs? Is it the business of government (or of a majority) to try making all men morally perfect? Does Prohibition prohibit? Does it cause evils as great as or greater than the evils it attempts to abolish? What is the "golden mean" between social order and individual liberty? It is such considerations—

and not that of "Americanism"—with which we must deal, and this attitude (of intelligent discussion rather than patriotic rhetoric) holds true concerning every other issue.

Here are the militarists—the advocates of universal conscription and military training—upholding their cause in the name of "Americanism," asserting that they are seeking the best interests, the necessary defense, of the country while others are "un-American" agitators and conspirators. And, on the other hand, opponents of militarism cry eloquently that "Americanism," the old and fine traditions of the country, are on their side. Both sides, insofar as they base their claims upon "Americanism," merely beg the question. We are living in the present, not in the past, and we should be planning for the future (for a better and safer future) instead of being unreasonably influenced by the past.

There is still another extreme of "Americanism" which consists in a bitterly prejudiced attitude toward Jews, Catholics, Negroes, or toward foreigners in general. That, you will recognize, is the Ku Klux Klan attitude. This cannot be called a feeling of the American majority, yet it is a feeling too widely held, frequently and flamboyantly associated with "Americanism," and (although more extreme and ridiculous) just as out of place in any sane argumentative review as the other appeals we have mentioned.

The trouble with this play upon the insidious name of "Americanism" is that, in the first place, it is clearly an excitement of the worst sort of patriotic prejudice. It is a substitution of secondary (or not even secondary but spurious) considerations for the real, primary considerations which should influence our thinking. It is the old effort—and, as of old, a too successful effort—to make

emotion triumph over reason. Now, it is the modern judgment—it is pre-eminently the distinction of the modern spirit, as it has always been the judgment of wise men—that reason should prevail; that it is the worst folly to ignore facts in an excess of passionate feeling; that slogans and phrases are deadly snares for the unwary mind—that the truth (not Truth in an absolute sense but the truth in practical ascertainment and use) is above all important and the one acceptable guide and criterion for intelligent people. When any group makes a great show of its supposed "Americanism," it is simply using the tactics of a political campaign, tactics which are notoriously unfitted to ascertain or appreciate the truth. A calm, thoughtful discussion of any question will not let the issue of so-called "Americanism" enter. It will deal with realities and leave such phrases indifferently aside. It will be realistic in every sense, even in recognizing that we are discussing problems which, with all their past influences and future possibilities, vitally belong to the present day.

It would perhaps be as futile or as misleading if I, in my turn, should attempt to define Americanism. I am shy of definitions, anyway, for they are too generally regarded as such strict and confining boundaries to thought. It seems indeed that when you define a thing you limit it and put shackles upon future thought about the same subject: no doubt definitions serve a useful purpose but they should not be carried too far. So, I should not be ready to say what is "Americanism." Maybe I doubt whether there is such a precise, well-defined, sure-guiding attitude. Surely, when one sees how recklessly the term is employed, there is a plenty of reason for doubting its authenticity in any case. All of these contradictory ideas which assail us on every hand cannot possibly constitute "Ameri-

canism," else "Americanism" were but another name for Bedlam.

What, indeed, would one select as a particular American characteristic or virtue? One might say individualism, yet that is surely not confined to the United States. It is found in various degrees and shapes everywhere. And, finally, it is not as true of our developed civilization today as it was of the pioneer society in an earlier time. Yet perhaps it is true that under the influence of democracy and a new country individualism has had a peculiar growth in America. If, again, we say that "Americanism" means a certain puritanical morality we are not giving the whole—nor indeed the greater part of the—truth. No doubt Puritanism in England and America has been exceptionally strong and is still an active agent, but it is found elsewhere too—in China, in Turkey, in Germany, in any country—with differences. What is immoral in one country may be moral in another country, yet there exists in each country a standard that is jealously maintained. So that we are amazed, let us say, by the Chinaman's notions of morality, while the Chinaman is astonished by our notions of morality. Even so, there has been a traditional line of Puritanism, coming chiefly and originally from England in the seventeenth century, which has affected American ideas. Yet no definition of "Americanism" can too narrowly adhere to that old puritanical conception. Our country has changed and is still changing (something more about these changes we shall see in the final chapter) so that characterizations which fifty or a hundred years ago would not have been far beside the truth are now plainly inadequate.

It may be said, finally, that America is distinguished for its business enterprise and for its practical attitude toward things—and here we come much closer to the truth,

while qualifications or explanations are still necessary. Undoubtedly, America is the greatest commercial and industrial country of modern times. Here the genius of trade and production and building has been carried to the very farthest limit to date. Here we see what is at present the ideal home of capitalism. Yet we should not therefore conclude that business is peculiarly a field in which the American mind displays itself. Industrialism had its real beginning in England and it was Napoleon who called the English a "nation of shopkeepers." Finally, as commercialism and industrialism have extended their influence, it has been observed that other countries fall as readily into the habits of trade as America. Here is a system—a mode of life—that is not simply American, but that is, more and more, international in its scope. The hustle-bustle of America may be natural to the leading capitalistic country of the world, but the rapid spreading of this capitalism and its active interests in other countries sufficiently prove that it is not a peculiar product of the so-called American mind. Even as the age of feudalism and chivalry could not have been called particularly English or French or Spanish, so the age of capitalism cannot be called American. Circumstances—a new country rich in natural resources, less traditionally bound and ready to adopt the new system of trade and industry, not held back by notions of gentility and old custom—made America a likely place for the full development of capitalism. But this was no proof of any peculiar American mind, which we recognize plainly enough when we see the world-wide development of capitalism in our day.

It seems to me that in order to answer the question: "What is Americanism?"—if it is a positively answerable question, which I doubt—a great deal more and better-ordered information should be, scientifically speaking, at

hand. It is my opinion that almost every analysis I have read of a French mind or an English mind or an American mind has been more subtle and artistic than it has been scientific. Even Taine, when he attempts to analyze the English mind—and he has the most sober scientific purpose—succeeds for the most part only in being artistically shrewd, fine and discriminating. To an extent he is scientific and correct, at least beyond present challenge, but he is for the most part artistic and, to use a rather discredited word, intuitive. Although ostensibly a scientific judge of literature, Taine is not able to account for the varieties and the contradictions—in a word, the extremes—in English literature. He cannot bring all English writers into a common formula. And his insistence upon the influence of the English climate becomes at times almost mystical—not that we should deny that influence, but that we should not press it so far.

It is always risky to be too free in one's definitions and to assign absolutely this or that characteristic to a certain country. Primarily, from a scientific point of view, the blood of the human race is so mixed that one cannot correctly speak of any "pure" race, and still less of any "pure" nationality, which is bound to be a mixture of racial strains. We know in our age that the chief differences among human societies are the differences, not of blood or biological separation, but of environment and culture. A Chinaman is just like an American, except that for ages he has lived under a social system that has, in the first place, been isolated from the rest of the world and that has differentiated him by long, steady impression so that he seems an alien creature. Yet the celebrated Kipling line:

The colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
Are sisters under their skin,

applies equally to the races of mankind. Scratch a Chinaman and, in appropriate circumstances, you will find an American, and *vice versa*.

Well, we still have not discovered what is Americanism—and I am very doubtful whether, as yet, it can be ascertained—seeing that Americanism is, after all, in the process of being unfolded and revealed, not yet as it were a completely made product. It is certain, anyway, that all contemporary appeals to Americanism are but a confusion of issues—an attempt, to put it plainly, at influencing by the emotion rather than the reason; an emphasis upon the very poorest question that might possibly be raised, the question whether a thing is American rather than if it is sensible or practicable or right. And it is these latter questions, not that of Americanism, which should rule our day-by-day and future policy. One necessity (and I call it so advisedly) I have already pointed out—namely, the requirement that America should understand and sympathize with world culture. Perhaps this, after all, will come to be the real definition of "Americanism"—namely, an amiable and natural mixture of the virtues which are supposed to belong to all the races. A good American, then, will be a man who has not national but universal qualities and who lives, let us say, according to rational ideas of right and wrong. It is as much as to say that "Americanism" is not narrowly confined to this country but that, insofar as it is at all valid, it is a quality universal—any man can display or exercise it according to his wish and, more importantly, his circumstances. The individual, then, is everywhere supreme when he wants to be. Individualism is not after all strictly American. And all this is but my own fancy, a suggestion of what I regard as an ideal, well-rounded "Americanism." It certainly does not apply to most Americans today, while it is true

of the free, cultured individuals everywhere. Better than an attempt to define "Americanism," I believe, is the resolution to dismiss the misleading and overwrought term entirely, devoting ourselves to the intelligent study and management of life and the cultivation of the best human qualities.

2. CONFORMITY OR VARIETY?

That last suggestion—of the broadest culture as constituting the best "Americanism" or, better, humanism—touches upon a question that is of more than theoretical importance. It is precisely a great evil of the canting talk about "Americanism" that it has for its object a cut-and-dried type of belief and conduct, the making of Americans strictly according to a certain pattern, narrowly conceived. All things considered, it is well that there are so many different brands of "Americanism" for this means that there is a healthy difference of opinion. It would obviously be far worse if the majority were clearly agreed upon a certain, complete standard of nationalism and insisted that everyone conform to that standard. That would bring a tyranny incalculable and terrible in its consequences.

The familiar slogan: "one hundred percent Americanism"—although those who repeat it are quite confusedly at odds as to what it means—nevertheless expresses the thought that there should be a common, authoritative formula of national, patriotic character which all should dutifully obey; that, as Wilson expressed it when he was in control of the war machine, Americans should all think and act alike, that unity (a specious name for slavish conformity) should prevail throughout the Republic. To say the least, that would be very dull. We have seen in various connections that it is the very diver-

sity of American life which makes it most interesting. The most brilliant and solid part of the record of America has been that due to the impulse and range of individualism, to the freedom of opinion and action, which—granting the necessities of a more complex social order—should be preserved earnestly by us and our descendants. History shows that the greatest progress has always been made when there was a lively mingling of different cultures; that a slavish and isolated type of society, strictly patterned and regulated, forming, as it were, one and all into a complete style of uniformity, has, everywhere, been the most reactionary. Differences make progress; differences make men interesting; differences make life rich and curious and infinitely active.

Does this seem obvious? Like all things, it is obvious to those who see and agree with it; while others will pertinaciously insist upon a more or less precise pattern of patriotism, faith, obedience to authority, and so on. It seems plain to us that freedom and variety are essential to a civilized life, and that nothing is to be dreaded more than a triumphantly dominating ideal of conformity, yet the fact remains that this latter—the ideal of conformity—is an evil influence in American society. If one is not like other people—well, one is suspect, one doesn't belong, one is in short a traitor or an alien to the herd. There is too much deference to public opinion and respectability, too great a fear of what the neighbors will say, too easy an inclination of falling into a rut of custom and following the crowd. Thoreau's suggestion that the individual who doesn't keep step with the crowd is simply responding to "the music of a different drummer" recommends itself to very few. One should, it is commonly felt, heed the beating of the popular drums.

We know that politically one cannot stand out in

radical opinion quite apart from the conventional political divisions, without incurring a good deal of suspicion if not actual hostility. At the least, one is rated as queer. And it is popularly believed that anyone who is a rebel, who disagrees, who protests (except in the conventional ways) is just simply a fellow who takes a perverse delight in being a "knocker," a "fault-finder," or a conspirator against the common virtues. It is all very well to be a Republican or a Democrat—these are traditional forms of party allegiance—but a Socialist, or, worse, a Communist, is looked upon as an enemy or an eccentric person and almost any explanation save that of genuine conviction is likely to be given for his attitude. He is envious, or he wants to attract attention, or he just wants to make trouble—so runs the average opinion. Similarly, the man who sharply and fundamentally criticizes our economic system, or the institution of marriage, or our beloved patriotic legends is not apt to be considered in a reasonable, let alone a friendly, light. He may even, in critical times, be treated very severely. Economic and political heresy (or what is called lack of patriotism) is the chief offense in America today. Of course, the cult of patriotism is more intensely asserted and forced upon us narrowly after a war in which passions have been wrought to a dangerous pitch; and now, ten years after the World War, we can speak our minds more freely and point out what we consider defects or injustices in American government and social life.

Religiously and morally, heresy has a more tolerable range—indeed, one writer has recently complained that heresy is now "respectable," to which we would reply that it would be well if it were true, but that, being true, it would cease to be heresy. Of course, the majority of Americans are not exactly friendly to any wide or bold

range of free thought, although they have a decreasing interest in religion. We have greater religious freedom because here is a phase of belief that is not so important as it once was; the people as a whole have not the extreme feeling on the subject that would make them intolerant. Even so, in some communities—or in an extensive section of the country, like the South—religious intolerance is still sadly effective and is a feature of the familiar American insistence upon conformity.

It is generally agreed that we have an increased freedom of morals—a rich, eager, “materialistic” life, especially in the large cities has reacted favorably against the old Puritanism, and besides the growth of rationalism has led more and more to rejection of dogmas in the field of behavior. In other words, we are getting away from the idea of authority in questions of right and wrong and substituting realistic judgments. This too is naturally carried to an extreme—in the enthusiasm of a new freedom—and there is a good deal of foolish and self-destructive behavior. But freedom, whatever its mistakes, is infinitely better than a strictly regulated slavery—through variety we shall find the best in life, while conformity is bound to be narrowing and oppressive, imposing the restrictions of a larger, but sufficiently uncomfortable prison.

On the higher levels of thought most Americans do not venture, but when by chance they have a glimpse of the tremendous heresies and unconventionalities which appear on these levels, they are very much shocked and may even feel vaguely that “something ought to be done about it.” Originality, intellectually speaking, is disconcerting, to say the least, and seems even malign to the crowd.

In literature and the other arts, America has advanced far beyond the Puritanism of the frowning

fathers, and here the American is not commonly concerned to interfere with freedom. But we are frequently treated to discourses on the need of conformity to a certain standard of politeness and virtue and orthodoxy in literature and the drama. The censors, although the sum of their efforts is not very great nor alarming, are nevertheless annoyingly busy.

Fortunately, as I have said, there is not in complete and agreed detail a body of doctrine or code of behavior to which everyone must yield. There is safety in conflicting numbers; just as Protestantism is better (or safer) because of its number of creeds and organizations than Catholicism with its single organization of concentrated purpose, which would be deadly if it were again (as once it was) all-powerfully prevalent. In general, the men who follow the easy tide of popularity—the majority—are unfriendly to the rebel, the critic, the questioner, the advocate of new ideas. Yet this majority is itself divided on many points. It cannot enforce, as it were, an ideal conformity—a completely rounded and unexceptionable program of belief and conduct—because it contains within itself so many different shades of thought and impulse. Yet in spite of this we observe that the gospel of conformity, with regard to this idea or that locality—in some things nationally, in others locally, in others through the action of smaller groups which, in their limited circle, control opinion socially (if not legally)—is deplorably upheld. Every day men are made to feel in various ways the threat or the actual injury of popular disapproval. Where there happens to be, temporarily or in a certain field, a definite urge and enthusiasm of public sentiment, the individual or the group that stands distinctly apart is target for criticism, perhaps ostracism, and sometimes worse. We cannot flatter ourselves that we have reached the age

of perfect freedom when, consistent with the most common-sensible and obvious requirements of social order, the individual can live his own life without question. Although there is a well-known popular saying that "It takes all kinds of people to make a world," there are really few people who can look tolerantly, even with genuine interest, upon a variety of temperaments, habits and opinions. The tendency of the average man (not always active, to be sure) is to resent differences. He believes in the gospel of conformity, and may be readily aroused, especially in the name of patriotism, to the active conviction that certain heresies should be severely dealt with.

As America happens to be my present subject, I say these things with special and contemporary application to our own country; but it does not follow that I am so simple-minded as to believe they have never been true of any other time and are not true of any other place today. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do"—that is a saying which is derived from long experience, testifying to the fact that men who have opposed the prevailing beliefs or who have gone contrary to the customs of the country have generally had rough treatment at the hands both of the crowd and the authorities. There have been periods and societies when a more liberal atmosphere prevailed. For example, among the ancient Greeks and Romans there was more freedom of thought, a more generous and varied culture, than among the medieval Christians. And the Moors of Spain, in the darkest time of mediævalism for the rest of Europe, set a fine example of toleration. But the tendency to enforce common beliefs and ways is not peculiar to any time or country.

It is not, however, a good excuse to say that in other countries the tyranny of popular opinion, of tradition, of custom is suffered even as it is in America. What we

should be concerned about is our own attitude. Nor is it simply a question of cultivating the disposition of fairness and toleration—even of curiosity to be introduced to a variety of ideas—at the risk possibly (as certain persons would allege) of some danger or sacrifice to ourselves: for the truth is that, by emancipating ourselves from this deadening, narrowing idea of conformity, we shall more truly enjoy and understand this rich, various, changeful spectacle of life. It is for our own good that we should be tolerant and curious and get beyond the poor restrictions of popularity and respectability. So that when I speak of an ideal “Americanism” as being a large conception and appreciation of world culture—when I say we should have our minds healthfully open to all the influences of thought and all the interests of life and all the contrasts of character—I am, not indeed attempting to define “Americanism,” but pointing out what I believe is the most pleasant and profitable course. In a word, “Americanism” should not be limited by definition but should be expanded by infinite and, so to speak, indefinable variety.

3. THE VALUE OF CRITICISM

I have said that the American (or the average man anywhere) dislikes and is apt to hotly resent criticism. Obviously, if we are to get away from the doctrine of conformity we must be prepared to take criticism naturally and easily, study how we may profit by it, and have an open mind to agree when the criticism is valid and to discount it, but with good nature, when we think it is ill-founded. There is nothing so valuable as criticism, whether to inform us of our errors or to lead us to verify more carefully the soundness of our opinions. Yet on every hand we see denunciations of the critic, sneers at the

critic, insinuations that the critic is simply a man in a bad humor who is not capable of liking anything.

Although every man is a critic in his own way, yet the average fellow—not realizing how much he indulges himself in criticism—speaks unpleasantly or hatefully of the critic. He joins in the chorus of “boosting,” of optimism, of popular agreement. And it becomes, paradoxically, the duty of all good men to criticize the critic—that is, to play the rôle of critic from a different point of view. One man, let us say, criticizes religion; another man criticizes free thought; both are critics, and the only question is which one has the best reason on his side. Here is a man who is a critic of traditions, and here is another man who is a critic of iconoclasm or innovation—well, let us have no prejudice against criticism *per se* but rather look intelligently to the points of fact and argument which are brought to our attention. It may be said, indeed, that to express an opinion at all is inevitably to be a critic—a critic of somebody or some idea.

And, historically, we know that the critical faculty has been an indispensable aid to the progress of the race. In science, philosophy, religion, government, social custom—in every field of life—the uses of criticism have been notably to carry mankind forward to better things. We do not forget that other conditions, social or economic, have supplied a powerful kind of impulse for change. But criticism has been the necessary instrument. There had to be critics to break down the terrible intolerance and ignorance of the Middle Ages, to establish the right of scientific research and free thought, to emancipate men from the despotic rule of kings, to destroy the joy-killing influence of Puritanism and so on. In every great period of beneficent change, in every great forward movement of humanity, we see the critics effectively at work. Today, in

short, the man who rails at present critics is enjoying the fine results of the activity of past critics.

Best of all, to be sure, is self-criticism. Here we come to a vice, if that term may be used not too strictly, which characterizes (though I do not mean exclusively) American life: namely, that of arrogance, self-satisfaction, an excessive pride and assertion of superiority. That this is an extreme fault of most Americans, no one can deny. We are taught, by every medium of patriotic propaganda, that America is in every way superior to the rest of the world—that Americans are the best and greatest people in the world—that anything labeled “American” must necessarily be fine, true, and beyond criticism. We may have the encouraging reflection that this attitude of superiority is less narrow and intense, now that America is more closely and awarely associated with the rest of the world, than it was in the days of our traditional isolation and provincialism. We should like to believe that this is true, and, if we do not make too much of it, we can say that it is partially true. At least, Americans are on the way to acquiring a world consciousness, a realistic range of comparison, which they could not possibly have had a few generations ago. Prejudice is somehow diminished by a wider contact and greater information. The more we know about other countries and about history, the less are we inclined to imagine that we are the one and only people, that we are exclusively and peculiarly in our own right “heirs of all the ages and foremost in the files of time.”

It is perhaps the very best sign of America’s coming-of-age that we have today in our country a considerable amount of self-criticism. The *Saturday Evening Post* school of writers are continually telling us how bad are those Americans who “find fault” with their own land and government and

traditions. In substance, what they throw at us is the proverb, "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest." Yet, from the viewpoint of these critics, they are cleaning, not fouling, the nest. They are genuinely interested in broadening, civilizing, enlightening American life. Unless the *Saturday Evening Post* writers are ready to say (which apparently they are) that American life is perfect, they have no reason to say that all criticism should be held in abeyance or should be suppressed. We know very well that flattery is not good for the individual—nor is it good for a nation or a particular form of society—but criticism, that is sincere and intelligent, leads to a balanced view of things and stimulates a healthy desire for self-improvement.

All this, of course, is the very opposite of a narrow, dogmatic, self-contained "Americanism." It is the very opposite too of the old idea, so dear to the heart of the average conservative man, that "Whatever is, is right." The fact that today American life is being surveyed, and is being both appreciated and critically brought to judgment, from every point of view is the most hopeful tendency for the future of our country. We shall never progress by sitting down complacently and telling ourselves how superior we are. We must learn to see ourselves as others—or as our critics—see us, and profit sensibly by every true word. Let us no longer talk vainly of "Americanism," but rationally analyze and deal with life not only here but in the world at large. Nothing would be more intelligent and hopeful than to forget, in a manner of speaking, that we are Americans and simply regard ourselves as human beings trying to make the best of life. Facts, not phrases, should guide us. Realities, not illusions nor traditions, should form our intellectual equipment. "Americanism" should be simply humanism.

CHAPTER XXII

The New America Summed Up and Compared With the Old

1. THE PAST IS DEAD, YET LIVES

IN concluding this survey of American life, it is well to have another and general look at the ground—at the high spots of that ground which we have covered. We have particularly studied American history, contemporary life, social conditions, and opinions in their various aspects, and now a final broad view should be helpful. The reader will have observed that we have throughout, in every phase of our subject, been attentive to the historical background: not simply from an artistic point of view, for the sake of picturesque contrast or narrative interest (although in these respects alone the use of history would be justified) but to show how the influences of the past have shaped—or if they have not entirely shaped, have left their characteristic marks upon—American society and culture today. History explains: it is a record of growth: it is an illuminating map of the road by which we have traveled. A nation's life cannot, any more than an individual's life, be considered narrowly and fixedly at any one point.

When we look at the active features, old and new and still uncertainly emerging, of America today we are naturally prompted to ask, in the common phrase, "How did it get that way?" We sometimes speak of "the dead past," but we know that this cannot be taken as an absolute assertion. If only as a memory, the past would have a cer-

tain kind of life which we could not intelligently ignore; but, even more, it has deeply impressed itself upon our national character, has led us in certain directions, and has bequeathed to us certain traditions, tendencies, institutions, and ways of looking at life. Certainly there have been immense and profound changes in American life, otherwise we should have no reason for studies, in any period, of the contemporary life; and we have in the present century advanced a great deal farther from the old America, so that today we can more approximately than ever make the comparison of America, old and new; yet in the latter part of the nineteenth century America was considerably changed from what it had been in the first half of that century, while in the early years of America as a republic—say, from the Revolution to the Civil War—there were differences from the colonial period.

Yet all this was in the natural course of development. One could not at any point draw a line and say that beyond such a line there was an entirely new America; old things and new existed side by side; the country developed, not purely in the spirit of original genius, but according to the first conditions of that development; those conditions made development rapid in certain things, slow in others; thus we find that material progress has been made more readily and with less resistance than progress in culture or ideas, so that we have always the significant contrast, between new methods of doing things and old, or but slowly changing, ways of thinking. Even today, when the material scene is so prodigiously different from what it was a hundred years ago, we cannot say that America has a new viewpoint fully to correspond with its new objects and technique of daily living.

Our sentiments and our practical policies do not neatly, logically agree. Take the change in our economic

life: we live in a period of large-scale, corporately owned and managed industry (this highly developed type of industry rules the country with a power and efficiency that cannot be shaken) yet the sentiment of economic individualism, which was appropriate to the years of pioneering and the early years of small industry in America, still prevails to an illogical extent; at the beginning of the century this sentiment was vigorous indeed and fought a steadily losing battle with the new, irresistible forces of industrialism; it was the old story of men slowly, reluctantly, imperfectly adapting themselves to change. And politically, even more, although the realities of politics (determined as they are by economics) have been decisively altered, the old sentiments and slogans—traditions that applied to a very different kind of society—are still effective. Americans are still prone to think of political action and democracy in terms that antedate the machine age: a fact which has led many, somewhat obscurely, to a belief in the entire futility of political action.

Again, in explaining American life from the historical viewpoint, we have to consider the remarkably influential fact that here was a new country that grew up with the machine age; that could, in a material way, most easily adjust itself to the forms of modern life; that, furthermore, had greater natural resources, a broader, richer field in which to develop the industrialism which began synchronously with its free and active youth; that had both a form of government and a physical scene of large opportunity which had broken many heavy fetters of the past and which encouraged individual initiative. This condition of newness, of tremendous energy, and of a large field for future expansion is observed in America today, so that over vast areas of the country it may be said, relatively, that development and settlement have but fairly

begun: *i. e.*, there is room for a far greater population and far greater productiveness; indeed, something like the simple conditions of pioneer life still exist in many parts of America, particularly in the West, while in parts of the South one may find the life and scenes of a century ago unchanged.

We have again, in several places, emphasized another way in which the newness of America—our great material opportunities and necessities for action—has influenced our manner of life, determined our interests, and bent our energies in certain directions: namely, in the neglect of that culture which arises from a settled and leisurely civilization, or a civilization in which life can be studied and enjoyed and artistically represented as well as acted in a practical way. The interests of America have been mainly political and economic (although, as we have seen, they have been very moral too, but not inspiringly nor creatively so); a people that are absorbed in the immense enterprise of settling a new land, of laying the material foundations and hammering out the material forms of a new civilization—and more especially when all this has to be done on a vast continental scale—are naturally but little interested in literature, art and the intellectual life, in what we broadly designate as culture; they are too busy for reflection, and not only that, but their environment is necessarily crude and invites to little save action; they have, so to speak, to build their house before they can really live in it.

The settlers of America had to fight Indians, clear the wilderness, win their national independence, establish a new and untried system of government, go through a long political-economic conflict and a fierce military struggle between two irreconcilable social systems, develop a new industrial system (build railroads, cities, factories, ma-

chines, all the equipment of capitalism), cultivate farms on the former sites of forests and wild prairies—wherefore one is not surprised that there was little energy left for the development of culture and little inclination to be curious about this “idle” diversion from the serious business of life. Also, with such overwhelming interest in great, practical objects and with such success, however crude and wasteful to the latter-day observer, in mastering obstacles, it is no wonder that America showed a naïve boastfulness and took naturally to the conviction that what it was doing comprised practically the whole of life’s importance.

Through religion and politics (two great interests of Americans) there might have been an escape, you will say, from this narrow, all-absorbing practicality: but religion in America was a bigoted, grotesque, entirely unintellectual theology, and also had a practical eye (as believers thought) upon rewards and punishments; while politics were superficial, opportunistic and when not simply “practical” (so that the term, “practical politics,” was a favorite way of referring to the “business” of government) were made hysterical with partisan passion and abuse: Americans did not go beyond religion to philosophy nor beyond politics to really thoughtful statesmanship and sociology. There was, in a word, no genial imaginative outlet save patriotism, which made the American mind more rather than less narrow; national expansion, which was regarded by the average man as simply the game—thrilling indeed within its limits—of “getting ahead” in life; and evangelism, which woefully addled the brains of its victims, making them at once unpractical (surely an “un-American” vice) and hopelessly alien to free thought or culture.

Great, dramatic events and extreme, colorful con-

trasts there have been in American history (what more interesting than the existence of two such far-removed forms of society, under one form of government, as the old South and the North? and what more immensely dramatic than the conquest of the wilderness and the free, adventurous days of the old West?) but they have not inspired an important literature nor have they been associated with any great national movement of culture; the brave, tragic drama of the Civil War did not stimulate the nation intellectually nor culturally, producing indeed only a frothy, shallow stream of flamboyant "romance." The slavery question was approached by some in a narrowly moral way and by the rest with the single, literal aim of saving the Union—it was not, in the broad sense, treated as a thoughtful or humanistic question: the amazing growth of America after the Civil War—the giant's stride across a continent, scattering cities, railroads, factories with a lavish hand—was simply expressed in its own energy, not imaginatively stirring the country but only stimulating the passion for practical success.

And this is not, in the ordinary sense, a *criticism* of America: it shows how a new country, with an enormous task of settling and building before it, without great artistic and intellectual traditions of its own, was wholly absorbed in the physical scene. It is only now, in the rich and strong American civilization of today, that the history of the country is being recorded in an important literature, a really creative and free literature—and this same literature is even more significantly giving us a great record (or posterity a great record) of the passing age. The story of America has been written in rapid, direct, unreflecting action: now we have the leisure and perspective to translate more enduringly this story into imaginative (yes, and critical, studied, definitive) forms. We have

this leisure, and yet America was never so busy. We are, in fact, at the beginning of a many-sided civilization—one that successfully devotes a great deal of energy to material achievements, that has also the leisure and the leisurely, bright disposition to enjoy life, and that has finally a development of culture that will bring life to its highest plane.

And we are throwing off certain influences that have sadly handicapped the development of a free life in America. Chief among such influences, which we have repeatedly had occasion to stress in the course of these studies, is that of Puritanism. Here indeed is a striking example of how the past, being dead, yet lives. As a definite, dominating social form, the Puritanism that ruled New England in the early history of the country disappeared long ago; but it is only in recent times that the grip of the Puritan attitude upon the American mind has been—well, I should not say absolutely *broken*—but decidedly loosened: or, perhaps it would be better to say that another attitude, free and realistic, has begun rapidly to assert itself and to confront and challenge with confidence the older attitude of Puritanism. Nowhere has this Puritanism—this heavily moral attitude, inartistic, intolerant, and antagonistic really to life—been so persistent and powerful as it has been in America. Not in England, its native home, has it exercised such a baneful influence upon the intellectual and literary life, over the whole culture, of a country; in England, even during the Victorian Age, there was a great and bold literature of free thought and beauty, criticism and a vivid reflection of life: and indeed the creativeness of English thought and literature has a long, scarcely interrupted history.

But in America, Puritanism—with its roots in religious narrowness and bigotry or a smug complacency—has

prevented until lately the growth of a real American culture. Puritanism and provincialism, or religion and a narrow "Americanism" hostile to the intellectual side of life, have stood as high and thick barriers between the practical concerns of American life and the wider life of thought and imagination: not even producing any large, significant literature of their own, they have simply impressed a stubborn obscurantism upon the American mind. (One finds oneself admiring the old South, corrupt and hopeless as that society fundamentally was, because of its freedom from the main, stifling influence of American Puritanism: and now the South, it appears, is the most puritanical large section of the country.) Obviously, this puritanical influence cannot long be forgotten in any discussion of America: for not only has it been a grimly dominant force throughout the greater part of American history, but it is even yet a traditional and active force that threatens the movement of modern enlightenment.

There is, as I say, a new spirit—more naturalistic, more joyous, and albeit more intelligently critical—which is extensively manifesting itself in our life; and the literature of our time which receives deservedly the widest and liveliest attention is an anti-Puritan literature, impliedly when not directly so; but the tendency narrowly to judge everything as a moral issue—the bogey of sin and the fetish of a petty respectability (or what used to be called Philistinism)—is still irritably conspicuous, especially in the hinterland, in the small towns and in the countryside, making less fuss (or a less successful fuss) in the intense, brilliant, variegated life of our cities. So, from the Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock down to the moralists (as a rule religiously inspired) of our own day, Puritanism has left its mark deeply upon the national psychology.

We have had, finally, to notice certain other influences in our history which, although the exact social conditions from which they arose have disappeared or have been greatly modified, have still an emotional life that cannot be ignored. The long isolation of America, physically and politically and even culturally, from the rest of the world (a relative isolation, to be sure, but a vital one)—its concern strictly with things in its own borders—naturally produced a narrow, self-satisfied, egocentric state of mind. Here we see a mingling of good and bad effect: for it was fortunate that the growing country remained safely apart from the intrigues and conflicts of the old world, but it was bad for American culture that the country should be so remote from, so indifferent to, the intellectual and social life of the rest of the world. Now America may really be called a world power and we have an expanding interest (also, when we think of the meaning of imperialism, an unsafe interest) in world affairs and in the life of nations; yet the isolated, ultra-national psychology of America has been so long and deep a growth that it does not readily give way before new conditions; Americans are still too narrowly absorbed in the affairs of their own country and too little interested—broadly, intelligently interested—in the world at large; superficially they read a good deal of international news (those who read something besides sports and scandals)—and this is better than nothing—but they do not thoughtfully follow, with a *world-minded* interest, the news of foreign governments, economics, and culture. (By the way and curiously enough, when one considers the geographical nearness and the important commercial relations, Americans know less about South America than about any other part of the world: an ignorance that is, no doubt, explained by the fact that the main theater of world events

has been Europe and, chiefly through Europe, Asia and Africa.)

Again, we see in the South the emotional heritage of the slavery regime: the passionate, intolerant spirit, the sectional pride and bigotry, the intense racial prejudice, the uncultured social life (where there is a greater hostility to intellectual freedom than anywhere else) have long outlived the system that originally instilled these characteristics: of course the race problem is still a reality, but the point is that the South persists in regarding it with the psychology of old slavery days; and here too we must remark the presence of the new and the old side by side—for the South is rapidly developing industrialism and there is a new spirit at work there, but the influence of the old South lives although the old South as an entity is dead.

Wherever we turn, we find that the main influences of American history—the past conditions under which the country has evolved—must be taken into account when studying this active, many-sided, changeful life of America today. New America has grown out of old America and it would be interesting, even if it were not more importantly explanatory, to trace the differences. We want to know what features of our country's life—especially its emotional life, its opinions, its way of looking at things—have their origin in the dead-yet-living past; we seek not merely to observe nor to criticize but to understand American life, what it has been and how it has come to be what it is; and we also want to know wherein we are falsely influenced by the past and in what things we have made a progressive development, building intelligently and freely upon the useful foundations of the past. What is it that represents true growth in American life and what is it

that we find inconsistent with this growth—the clinging to past faiths and attitudes that should be merely history?

2. WHAT IS OUR PROGRESS?

Let us, then, briefly reconsider these questions. We have looked at American life over a pretty wide range, and we have not followed any narrow policy of praise or blame: we have endeavored, first and last, to describe and understand as fairly as possible: and we have found many things to admire, along with many things to deplore, in the national scene. One point of view, let us say, which we have all along condemned is that which refuses to admit anything wrong in America or which holds, at least, that it is a patriotic duty to ignore it in any public speech or writing: which insists that the proper pose of an American, whatever privately he may believe, is that of unreserved eulogy toward his country, its government, its institutions, its history entire, and its galleried heroes. That is a feeling (for it is not a clearly reasoned nor defensible position) which is wrong in America or anywhere else. Pride ever adds to folly. Not to admit a mistake is to be doubly mistaken. One might say indeed that it is the first duty or the best office of a patriot to be a friendly, intelligent, clear-seeing critic of his country. We are not serving our friends well when we tell them that their faults are virtues. To be sure, there are difficulties—embarrassments—in personal frankness. But in discussing a country—in studying large social and cultural questions—there should be an impersonal freedom. One should not be deterred by any binding conception of “Americanism” but should have regard only for a truthful view.

Loyalty is an insidiously erroneous notion as applied to any phase of life. One should not be loyal, right or wrong, to a country nor to a class nor to a party nor to an indi-

vidual nor to an idea. It means simply that one is prepared to go against all just and intelligent values, that one has fettered one's judgment with a heavy unyielding bias, and—actually—it means not merely that one will defend the object of one's loyalty in wrong but that one will form the habit of making the wrong appear (to oneself as well as to others) right, that one will deliberately confuse and cripple the power of impartial reasoning. It is best to see ourselves as others see us: or to try, clearly as we may, to analyze ourselves, our country, our ideas as if we were dealing with someone else, with another country, or with another set of ideas. Perhaps none of us can ideally maintain such an attitude: but by trying to look at things in this way we shall come much nearer the truth. Loyalty—patriotism—national pride carried stubbornly to an extreme: here is a decidedly bad heritage of the past, which does not consist with true progress in American life. For one of the worst consequences of this patriotism is that it leads us to cling to beliefs and standards of the past when they are no longer, if ever they were, valid: it opposes the dead weight of tradition to the living needs of an ever-changing society. Our greatest danger today, I believe, is just this old, narrow habit of patriotism.

Puritanism, as I have said, is not the absolutely ruling force that once it was; and the signs are that it is weakening: perhaps day after tomorrow, if we may speak vaguely, the last traces of it will be gone. Meanwhile Puritanism survives with sufficient aggressiveness—certainly in the conventional, popular mediums of opinion in America—to be a serious object of our condemnation. Here is a habit of thought or emotion which we have erroneously held over from the past. It is a reminder of our awkward—worse, our superstitious—age. Let us stop looking at

every question in a moral way. For what does this moral attitude imply? It means that we look at things passionately and intolerantly instead of considering them with cool, rational intelligence: it means too that we see things, not as they really are, not reasonably and freely, but in conformity to old dogmas, taboos, or pre-scientific theological standards: it means that we are less than brave, frank, and just and that we have no sympathy with or no confidence in the spirit of freedom which has brilliantly asserted itself in the modern history of the race, which has indeed been responsible for the finest and soundest progress of the race.

If we break away from Puritanism, then we shall not judge actions as good or bad in accordance with past prejudices or the dogmatic claims of authority but shall look at them realistically according to their nature and consequences. It means too that we shall not try to make our neighbors do as we do: that we shall fully admit the right of personal liberty and the private nature of what is called conscience: that we shall judge behavior in the light of its definite social consequences, holding that whatever does not interfere with the orderly and free progress of society—whatever is safely compatible with the needs of social life—shall be left to the individual's choice: and finally that whatever cannot be reasonably shown to be actually *wrong in itself* shall be admitted as moral (if we wish to use that ill-odored term) in spite of all the dogmas and creeds and prejudices and excessively virtuous feelings with which it may conflict. Is that a large order? Yet many hold this viewpoint quite easily: indeed it seems to them the most natural viewpoint in the world. Toward that ideal, at any rate, is progress: clinging to Puritanism is facing backward: it is living, most mistakenly and unhappily, in the past.

We have also pointed out, and it is useful emphatically to repeat, that we are submitting to an evil influence of the past when we make unjust and even bitter racial distinctions. Utterly inconsistent with the real progress of America—survival, let us say, of America's reckless, headlong, impassioned youth—is the discrimination in practice or the prejudice in feeling or attitude against Negroes, Jews, and "foreigners" in our country. It is a fact that America's treatment of racial groups that are somehow not supposed to come within the sacred pale of "one hundred percent Americanism" (although all Americans are foreigners, at the most a few hundred years removed from the immigrant) has been shameful. This attitude America must outgrow before it can stand forth fully in progressive pride. It is the attitude of an imperfect acquaintance with history, science, or human nature. It is not compatible with a civilized life. This, to be sure, is another aspect of that evil of patriotism which we have already condemned. It is crass self-glorification, selfishness, and—though maybe unconsciously—an impression of self-interest and sore competitive feeling. We do not need to hold the idea of brotherhood as a pale, weepy sentimentality in order to realize that toleration and common justice make the civilized attitude.

It is another American fault which we have felt called upon to criticize (and which is by way of being corrected, as indeed are some of these other faults) that we in America are not sufficiently attracted by ideas, by clear realistic processes of thought as apart from passions and traditions, by what we broadly distinguish as culture. True, America is literate; true, America goes to school; true, America goes in eagerly for various kinds of self-improvement with an eye toward success in the narrow meaning of the word; but America is not genuinely,

greatly interested in culture. Ideas are still regarded suspiciously by the vast majority of "good citizens" in America, who are satisfied with the notions that, mainly, formed the creed of old America. I do not say this in a spirit of impatience, for already it has been explained why culture has had a belated place in American life. Yet we have pointed out the danger: namely, that the psychology of the past survives the conditions of the past, and that long after we have attained a great national civilization materially, in which culture may be widely and easily developed, our indifference to culture may continue. This is said, really, not so much to point out the need of a tendency toward national culture as to encourage this tendency, which we can already see. It is another illustration of the contradictory mingling of the old and the new: the old antipathy to culture (or indifference, or contempt, or merely vague suspicion), which was puritanical, provincial and practical, still is largely prevalent in America. Yet, emerging from this obscurantism of the past, there is a new spirit of culture, an elevation among large numbers of their standards in literature, in thought, in social vision, and in personal relations (wherein we have the finely distilled essence of culture). It is clearly this new tendency that we should encourage, and pass a completely unfavorable judgment upon one remarkable attitude of the American past.

These are some of the chief points in our criticism of America. They are, of course, not so much criticism of the past as of the past-in-the-present: they are the features of the past which America should get rid of. Yet there are progressive phases of life in America today, and these also we must fairly recall before parting with the subject. What we should mention, first of all, is obviously the material power and splendor of this new

American civilization. I have had occasion frequently to disclaim any sympathy with the outcry against American "materialism," and it has been well to make this clear again and again, for this is not only a point of view that is widely spread by sentimentalists and "spiritual" critics of America (indeed of modern life as a whole), but it may be thought that when I deplore the absorption of Americans in action and practical things I am so far yielding to this "spiritual" attitude.

Far from it: as I do not recognize such a thing as "spiritual" life at all, it naturally follows that when I speak of culture, mental activity, the artistic attitude of beauty and joy in life, I am regarding these things as, philosophically, material in their meaning. When I read a book, or see a play, or listen to a symphony, or admire a sunset, or delight in meeting fine personalities, I am living in a material way indeed but on a higher plane than when I am merely driving a car, or making money, or enjoying a good meal, or performing any other practical action in life.

So I return again to the point that the materialism of America—let me write it without quotation marks, for it is real and not shameful, and indeed is indispensable to the very "spiritual" folks themselves—is misunderstood and is crowded into too narrow a compass of definition. Let me say then particularly that the mechanical civilization of America—its great industries, its enormous distribution of the comforts of life, its countless inventions that are in popular use to make life brighter and easier, its excellent swift means of travel, its wonderful physical equipment for amusement, education, and the finer sort of culture—is a mighty triumph of modern life. Here, beyond cavil, America has progressed far beyond the dreams of our ancestors of a few generations ago. Look-

ing at the physical scene, we see that a new world has been created—or evolved—and that in this new world a far richer and infinitely more expansive, significant life is going on.

Nor do I believe it is true that this vast modern machinery of life is dominating man: he is learning how to control it, from the social point of view, more wisely and justly; and he has more leisure, enjoys life more, and is becoming more civilized than ever before, more nearly approaching the ideal of human mastery over nature and over the complications of society; I say this not in a spirit of shallow, uncritical optimism, for I see much that is wrong in our social system and am sure that great changes lie before us when war, poverty, and ignorance will cease to shame the greater works of man; but the cry of alarm, which we frequently hear, that machinery is going to destroy mankind is very illogical indeed when one considers what immeasurable benefits it has already bestowed upon the race.

However, the way to regard this mechanical triumph is in the nature of a broad foundation upon which to build a free, intelligent, cultural, civilized life. Supplying our material wants, we should then turn to our mental or emotional needs: we should develop not merely the skill of our hands, we should not only extend the range of our bodily activity, but we should develop the power and extend the range of our minds. And, as I have just said, that is the natural outcome, whose beginnings we can see, of a rich, leisured civilization. Today America is a scene not merely of material construction but of active intellectual discussion, of amazing literary production, and of a growing artistic consciousness. True, this cultural tendency has not “swept the country”: it is confined to a minority, but a minority that steadily increases; it is an

ever-widening circle of influence. If it were for nothing else, we should be very glad that the minority of us, large or small, who enjoy the atmosphere of lively contemporary ideas, who enjoy good books and all that belongs to culture, have now an opportunity to treat ourselves lavishly from American sources: whether few or many appreciate it, there is really today a vital American culture and—to be practical and therefore "American"—this culture is paying its way: quite evidently it is widely enough appreciated for this practical purpose.

We have observed also, in these studies, that America is—or many Americans are—getting away from the old notions: that while the old America is still alive emotionally in current opinion, there is a new America which gathers strength steadily and which—so our opponents, the defenders of traditions and dogmas, assure us—threatens to swamp the old America. We have seen that religion is a declining force in our country, forming indeed a sharp and thoughtful contrast to the pulpit-ridden America of the past century. Free thought is a familiar attitude in the land and the tone of skepticism, bold or more or less veiled, is discerned in many places where it was formerly strange or altogether unknown. Criticism of a wide and interesting variety is really popular, it seems—popular, at any rate, with an extensive audience. Plain speaking is the order of the day.

And we have observed, again, a new freedom of behavior which marks the emancipation from that Puritanism which so gloomily, sternly dominated America throughout most of its history; which is, to be sure, still a viewpoint widely held—not, however, strong enough to terrify men and women into the timid obedience of yesteryear. It does indeed appear that while the theory of Puritanism is still conventionally respected in America—

at least in public speech and writing through popular mediums such as the newspapers—and while of course the preachers still assert it eloquently and the politicians pretend to believe in it, the behavior of most Americans is freely indifferent to the dogmas of the hidebound Pilgrims of rockbound New England. Perhaps, in freedom of conduct—in freedom from the Puritan jail—America has progressed more greatly than in any other respect save that of mechanical achievement. Our Puritan public opinion may be numerically great, but it is not as effective as it was even a quarter-century ago.

I prefer to close on a note of congratulation to the new America. It is, I am entirely confident, the America of the future. Freedom, once tasted, is too precious for surrender. Enlightenment, once well started, will naturally increase—the more so as, with our scientifically strong civilization, infinitely resourceful and world-wide, we shall not again slip back into a Dark Age. Religion, that malign force which blinded and bloodied mankind for ages, is not likely to regain its oldtime sway—that is, indeed, a most unlikely thing—and science, we may assure ourselves, will increasingly become the guide of the race. We have the basis and the materials in America of a great, free, intelligent, joyous civilization: and while there is still a good deal of stumbling and fumbling, we are on our way. Gladly we turn from the past and the past-in-the-present to those things in contemporary America which point to a progressive future.

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